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ABSTRACT

Designed as a forum for discussion of substantive issues in humanities disciplines and the place of the humanities in higher education, this journal offers articles, book reviews, and reports covering a variety of humanities-related topics. This issue contains: (1) "The Feasibility of Educational Change," by Richard Ekman; (2) "The Humanities and the Idea of Excellence," by Catharine R. Stimpson; (3) "Innovation and Tradition," by Thomas V. Litzenburg, Jr.; (4) "On The Importance of History in the Curriculum," by William R. Cook; (5) "Liberal Arts Across the Curriculum: The Basis for Education," by Richard A. Wright; (6) "Work and Liberal Learning," by George T. Karnezis; (7) "Memory as Method: Literature and Writing about Work," by Janet Zandy; (8) Elnora Rigik's "A Call for Renewal in America," a review of "Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life," by Robert N. Bellah, et al; (9) Robert R. Lawrence's "Critical Thinking, Liberal Thinking, and Writing," a review of "Teaching and Assessing Writing: Recent Advances in Understanding, Evaluating and Improving Student Performance," by Edward M. White and "A New Case for the Liberal Arts: Assessing Institutional Goals and Student Development," by David G. Winter, et al; (10) Max Reichard's review "Three Reports on Curriculum Reform and Excellence in Higher Education," which discusses "To Reclaim a Legacy," by William J. Bennett; "Involvement in Learning," by the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education; and "Integrity in the College Curriculum," by Frederick Rudolph, et al; (11) the Humanities Policy Statement of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges; (12) "Literary Theory and Literature Teachers: New Life for Introductory Courses," by Carole L. Edmonds and Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr.; (13) "Toward a Bibliographic Guide to Teaching the Principles of Management through Humanities," by Donald W. Ellis and Francis Michael Stackenwalt; (14) "Cultural Literacy and Developmental Education at the Community College of Philadelphia," by Karen Bojar; and (15) "Europe in the Fast Lane, America through a Telescope," by Skip Lowery. (EJV)

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Liberal Arts Across the Curriculum:
The Basis for Education

Essay Reviews and Reports contributed by *Karen Bojar, Carole L. Edmonds and Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr., Donald W. Ellis and Francis Michael Stackenwalt, George T. Karnezis, Robert R. Lawrence, Skip Lowery, Max Reichard, Elnora Rigik,* and *Janet Zandy*

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The Community College Humanities Association is a nonprofit organization devoted to promoting the teaching and learning of the humanities in community and two-year colleges.

The Association's purposes are:

- To advance the cause of the humanities in community colleges through its own activities and in cooperation with other institutions and groups involved in higher education;
- To provide a regular forum for the exchange of ideas on significant issues in the humanities in higher education;
- To encourage and support the professional work of teachers in the humanities;
- To sponsor conferences and institutes to provide opportunities for faculty development;
- To promote the discussion of issues of concern to humanists and to disseminate information about the Association's activities through its publications.

The Association's publications include:

- ***The Community College Humanities Review,*** a journal for the discussion of substantive issues in the humanistic disciplines and in the humanities in higher education;
- ***The Community College Humanist,*** a tri-annual newsletter;
- ***Proceedings of the Community College Humanities Association;***
- **Studies and reports** devoted to practical concerns of the teaching profession.

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The Feasibility of Educational Change

Richard Ekman

IN THE ANIMATED public discussion about the dramatic changes now occurring in higher education, some have argued that the fields of knowledge that comprise the liberal arts are almost dead, soon to be replaced by new technological fields, themselves the reflections of the explosion of new knowledge. Others have maintained that the liberal arts are viable, but that to survive they will need nurture, that only by re-establishing a mandatory course of study based on the liberal arts will civilization survive. Implicit in these two prognoses — over-simplified here in order to sharpen the contrast — are two alternate theories of change. One suggests that education changes because knowledge itself changes as new scholarly research affects both what we believe to be true and significant and also the very categories by which we organize our study of knowledge, while the opposing theory suggests that education changes because of laws of supply and demand, because of market pressure to teach some fields rather than others.

In many respects, the humanities are in good shape. At the scholarly end of the spectrum, where monographs are written and research is conducted, one can find evidence that suggests a very healthy "industry" of scholarly productivity. Opportunities for grants, the number of articles and books that are published each year, and the number of subsidized berths at research centers are all very large, perhaps unprecedented in America. And at the other end of the spectrum, the end at which the general public has its access, one can find equally strong indications of health. Statistics, for example, on book-buying habits, library circulation, attendance at museum exhibitions, or viewing of public television shows concerned with subjects in the humanities suggest evidence of great public interest in and appreciation of the humanities.

But in the middle of the spectrum, the place occupied by formal institutions of education, there is some cause for concern. We need no recitation of what is wrong with American education. To paraphrase the rhetoric of the National

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Richard Ekman *is the director of the Division of Research Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities; previously he was the director of NEH's Division of Education Programs.* *This paper was originally presented at the annual meeting of the Community College Humanities Association, Southerwestern Division, October 24, 1985.*

Commission on Excellence in Education, American education has been overwhelmed recently by a rising tide of commission reports. There has been enough hand-wringing. Moreover, the agreement among the recent reports of various commissions that faculty members' preoccupation with specialized research has contributed to their neglect of undergraduate teaching is misleading. The recent reports are wrong: effective teaching and a vital scholarly life are usually found in the same individuals — as Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Ladd have amply documented — while lackluster teaching and neglect of scholarly research are typically linked in the careers of many other members of the professoriate.

Even so, there are a few educational problems that are peculiar to the humanities —problems that are not shared by other fields in the curriculum. The first of these is the widespread disagreement over what the humanities are. Even among people whose professional lives are in the humanities, there is little consensus on any working definition. This is a serious issue. One indication of the fundamental disarray in our understanding of what the humanities are can be seen in the results of a recent survey conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), an organization that includes all state commissioners of elementary and secondary education. A questionnaire was sent to individuals with job titles such as "assistant commissioner for humanities" or "deputy superintendent for language arts," and its first question asked respondents to describe their humanities programs. One-third of the respondents returned the form, having gone no further than the first question, indicating that they did not have a humanities program. The people in charge of the survey at the CCSSO office, incredulous, then telephoned the respondents. From their conversations, they began to realize that the humanities were frequently seen as separate from English, history, and foreign languages. The respondents viewed the humanities as inherently an interdisciplinary, optional, honors subject. By extension, the humanities seemed somehow to be mere enrichment, ornaments, frills, and fields with no internal standards, intellectual axioms, or methods of their own. To these respondents, the humanities were on the fuzzy edges of "real" learning, which seemed to reside elsewhere. If one-third of the individuals in the state governments who have responsibility for the humanities curriculum in elementary and secondary education hold such a view of the humanities, that is cause for alarm. After all, the humanities are fields that do have internal standards. The humanities are a body of ideas, texts, and knowledge of lasting significance, as well as a set of anaytical skills that transcend the fields in which they are initially learned. The humanities are basic fields of study for everyone, not only the Ph.D.-bound or even the college-bound.

There is a second problem that is peculiar to humanities education: namely, that the state of humanities education cannot be described as a monolith. It is

much more complicated, with various fields faring differently from one another. Statistical evidence, for example, would suggest that the study of history is in decline in American colleges, whereas the study of foreign languages is beginning to boom as it has not for many years, with Latin particularly in demand. The study of English, despite ambivalent statistical evidence, is undergoing enormous changes in the understanding of what should be taught under the banner of English. In the last ten or fifteen years, English departments have taught not only English and American literature but also foreign literatures in translation, film, literary theory without the literature itself, popular culture, folk culture, creative writing, expository writing, and so on. John William Ward, in an insightful introduction to the 1985 annual report of the American Council of Learned Societies, notes that virtually all the disciplines are undergoing considerable ferment, that doubts have surfaced within most disciplines about their limits and authority, and that the thrust toward greater interdisciplinary emphasis is occurring in almost every discipline.

These two peculiarities of the humanities must be kept in mind when formulating any answer to the initial question of how educational change occurs. They do not, however, account for the way in which the growth of scholarly knowledge itself can affect educational change. The problem is complex because knowledge does not evolve in a vacuum and "pure" research does not necessarily lead to particular changes in the curriculum. Sometimes it does; sometimes it does not. For example, the recent advances in historical research which have relied heavily on new social scientific and quantitative methods (especially demographic studies of nonelite social groups) have led to a recasting of the undergraduate curriculum in many institutions to de-emphasize traditional political, military, and diplomatic history. Yet no generalization can be made about the kinds of institutions that adopted these changes. Certainly, it was not only the sleepier colleges with less scholarly faculties or less able students that retained the traditional curriculum in history. The picture is much more complicated than that.

The reverse is also true: that is, not only has the discovery of new knowledge not dictated what was put into the curriculum, but sometimes the needs of the curriculum shaped scholarly activity. The most dramatic recent illustration of this tendency in the humanities has been the extraordinary growth of expository writing as a legitimate subfield within the literary teaching profession. This development could not have occurred had not many colleges found in recent years that enormous numbers of entering freshmen exhibited severe problems that required new approaches to remedial English.

A comparable degree of fluidity exists in the explanation of educational change when one weighs the influence of the "relevance" of subjects in the curriculum to students' backgrounds and interests. My contention is that recent

curricular changes have not been dictated by the "relevance" argument, despite facile explanations that suggest such causality. The variations among institutional experiences in some of the new fields in the curriculum — women's studies, ethnic studies, and science-values studies — shed light on the competing claims made for including them in the curriculum. The original and principal argument for women's studies (as well as for some ethnic studies) was that new populations on campus required new subjects and new conceptions of subject matter in order to make the curriculum relevant. But that argument stands in contrast to the one that was made most frequently in the past decade for the inclusion of Asian studies on campus. That argument was not made on the basis of the characteristics of new populations of Asian-American students, but rather on the grounds that Asian studies was an overlooked and important subject for the general education of all students.

A review of the evolution of these new fields in the curriculum suggests how malleable the curriculum really is. Women's studies, for example, after a period of existing in separate programs and departments has, by and large, been incorporated into traditional departments and fields. And black studies, which has often remained a separate unit in colleges and universities, has during the recent period of budget strictures not survived in many institutions. Asian studies is a countervailing illustration: still very small in its presence on most campuses and still fighting for a foothold in general education, it is nonetheless growing. Moreover, a fourth variety of experience is represented by curricular programs on the interrelations among science, technology, and values: these have also survived, but usually as parts of interdisciplinary, nondepartmental, general education programs, such as integrative or capstone courses for freshmen or seniors.

In short, to judge from the recent history of the new fields in the humanities curriculum, there is very little in the curriculum that appears to be the inevitable result of the influence of external factors. There is no inexorable logic from the frontiers of scholarly research that causes the organization of knowledge to be recast in, say, the way the biological sciences were recast about twenty-five years ago. And there is little in the admissions marketplace that dictates the way in which the humanities ought to or must be taught. Recent history suggests that we can shape our institutions much more than we assume we can, that we need not regard ourselves as the passive victims of large, impersonal forces we cannot control.

If this interpretation is correct, it suggests that we ought to feel liberated enough to take a fresh look and to ask some fundamental questions: what is worth knowing; why do we consider something worth knowing; and how do we decide what ought to be included in an, admittedly, already crowded curriculum, especially when we have finite resources? Let us follow the case of Asian studies.

To the question of what is worth knowing, the answer is that the culture of Asia is worth knowing. To the second question, why is it worth studying Asia, a number of arguments could be put forward such as that Asian culture is intrinsically rich material or that Asia has an important economic and strategic relationship to us as Americans.

To the third question, how do we decide what ought to be taught, it is more difficult to formulate answers. Asia is a big place, after all, and includes many civilizations with distinct and rich cultural traditions, all worthwhile. Most colleges and universities that in the last decade decided to enlarge their curricular attention to Asia did so by concentrating on East Asian studies —China or Japan. And China and Japan fit our criteria very well. Each is economically and strategically important; each is a large and populous section of the globe; each is an ancient and rich culture. But the same could be said for India or Indonesia, yet very few colleges have manifested their concerns with Asian studies by developing large programs in Indian or Indonesian studies.

One can be cynical about the growth of East Asian undergraduate programs. After President Nixon visited China, the American public became fascinated with China, and China became a popular fad in many aspects of American life. We in the academy, who ought to know better than to succumb to popular fads, reflected that popular interest by devoting our curricula to China rather than to other parts of Asia which are equally strong in their intellectual claims on curricular space.

One can be cynical, but one need not be. In weighing each subject, discipline, field, or text for possible inclusion in the curriculum, we sometimes argue in terms of the vocational relevance of a subject. But in arguing how useful a subject can be in preparing for a job, we can easily fall into exaggerated claims. As Edward Friedman, academic vice president of the Stevens Institute of Technology, observed after hearing once too often about a college's claim to give its students so-called technological literacy, the typical college computer science curriculum has about as much relation to true technological literacy as driver's education does to automotive engineering.

An instrumental view of the humanities is dangerous in its appeal. While it is unquestionably a good thing, for example, that three-quarters of the 127 medical schools in the United States now have humanities components in their curricula (many of these developed with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities), it is a trend that is too easily trivialized. At the Endowment we sometimes see, even today, proposals from medical schools for "Humanities in Medicine" programs which inevitably contain a course called "Literature and Medicine" with a reading list that consists entirely of novels in which doctors are the main characters or in which there is a lot of death and dying. Reading these

books will not necessarily make medical students better physicians; and such a course probably will not do justice to the study of literature. With one chance in the medical curriculum to teach literature, there is surely a better way to do it.

The other argument that is used frequently to weigh the importance of a subject in the curriculum is the extent to which it can be claimed that the subject contributes to a self-contained formative experience for students — the degree, that is, to which it bolsters the internal cohesion of the educational experience. This emphasis on coherence is receiving great attention these days. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's report on "common learning" was the first to articulate the ideal. The National Endowment for the Humanities' 1982 educational grant guidelines were the first among foundations and public agencies to offer support to institutions that wished to enact this ideal. It should be noted that both the Carnegie report and NEH's reorganization of its education programs preceded the release of *A Nation At Risk*. More recently, the National Institute of Education's report, "Involvement in Learning," the Association of American Colleges' report on the meaning of the baccalaureate degree, and William Bennett's "To Reclaim a Legacy" all make the point that coherence in the curriculum is very important.

Many will nevertheless dismiss the rhetoric of coherence as not applicable to their own institutions, saying that perhaps a residential, liberal arts college can plan its courses this way, but not a multipurpose institution with a heterogeneous student population. My view is that in this area, too, we encounter fewer constraints on our actions than we presume. Consider, first, two Ivy League institutions, Brown University and Dartmouth College. Both are well-to-do, residential, highly selective, and devoted primarily to the liberal arts. Dartmouth has a reasonably traditional amount of structure in its graduation and general education requirements, while Brown has almost none. This contrast suggests that there is little inherent in being a highly selective, liberal arts, residential institution that makes inevitable either a highly structured, coherent curriculum or its opposite.

Consider, next, the case of multipurpose pupblic institutions, such as urban universities or community colleges with extremely heterogeneous student populations. Many public, urban institutions hesitate to prescribe much for all students, but there are also institutions such as Brooklyn College of the City University of New York which have a genuine core curriculum. Many community colleges gear their curricular programs to the specialized career goals of students, but there are also institutions such as Kirkwood Community College in Iowa which have core programs that rely heavily on important texts, read in full by all students. One can be too ostrichlike in looking to the internal coherence of the curriculum as the basis for curricular choices, just as one can

be too much inclined to look for imperatives for educational planning in the circumstances outside colleges and universities.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has acted upon its analysis of what is feasible in the world of educational change. We have reorganized our grant programs to make them more useful in efforts to restore the humanities to a central role in undergraduate education. By de-emphasizing peripheral experiments in humanities education — which were often, in the past, the main activities supported by foundations and agencies, but which regrettably left few long-term improvements in the quality of instruction — our hope is that Endowment funds will now be awarded in forms that will enable faculty members and administraters to do the things that are already their main priorities, priorities that have been established through each institution's customary governance procedures.

This deference to institutional choices is intended to prevent the Endowment from acting on the basis of any governmentally determined canon of what is important or central to the curriculum. By relying on a peer review process that recognizes institutional differences, the Endowment may support a project at one college that might be judged more harshly if it were proposed by another college. There is no fixed set of ideas, texts, or subjects that guarantees an NEH grant.

Moreover, the criterion of centrality to undergraduate education that is often the factor that persuades a peer review panel to favor a project in, say, history over another in, say, musicology is emphatically an institutional, pedagogical, and contextual notion that plays an appropriately large role in NEH's education programs but, with equal appropriateness, a very small role in NEH's scholarly programs. An extremely significant research project on the frontiers of new knowledge in, for example, musicology will not be judged by the likelihood that its results will be immediately translated into a useful form for teaching undergraduates. Although NEH's divisional structure recognizes that curricular centrality is not synonymous with scholarly significance, this recognition by a funding source does not relieve each institution from the responsibility to make its own deliberate choices of the ways in which the most vital scholarship of its faculty members will be related to its curriculum.

These sentiments may sound like so many castles in the air — fine, brave rhetoric for someone with lots of foundation money to spend. And some may feel that such rhetoric would be impossible to translate into a course of action on campus. Even die-hard pessimists and fatalists ought to note, however, that there are actions worth considering that are both feasible and likely to be successful as efforts to strengthen the study of the humanities in colleges and universities.

First, I think we need to learn to think more contextually, to think more in terms of the "system" of education of which we are a part. It is a system, after all, of approximately 3,200 colleges and universities, each with a distinctive part to play in an interdependent network. While it is practically patriotic to delight in the pluralistic chaos of American education, to relish the fact that local autonomy in educational decision-making exists in the United States in contrast to, say, the centralized cultural ministries of European countries, it is also true that a greater appreciation of the distinction between what one's own institution can do best and what other institutions can do best will enable all of us to make better educational decisions. Each college or university ought to play to its distinctive strengths. There is also a system of scholarly research that includes, in addition to the scholars themselves, the auxiliary enterprises of libraries and archives, the preparation of databases, definitive editions, translations, and such reference tools as atlases and dictionaries, and the peculiar economic considerations of scholarly publishing. We all need to know more about the ways in which the parts are fitted together.

Second, we ought to expect more of the intermediary professional associations of which we are a part. Some of these organizations are defined by institutional type, and these tend to select causes that represent the largest financial interests of their members. When funds for student financial aid are endangered, for example, these organizations bargain away positions taken on smaller financial issues, such as the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education's appropriation. These tradeoffs are probably an inevitable part of lobbying by organizations that are defined by institutional type. Other organizations are defined by their dedication to a subject field: the American Historical Association, the Modern Language Association, the Medieval Academy of America, and so on. These days, with professors less numerous and less able to pay dues to as many organizations as in the past, some of these associations are engaged in a frantic scramble to retain members. Often, in the attempt to be all things to all people, they hesitate to offend anyone and thus avoid making judgments about good and bad practice in teaching or in the scholarship of the field whose integrity they are supposed to defend. We need to work harder as members of these organizations to try to overcome this tendency, to keep the professions' own organizations vigilant in their articulation and defense of high standards in college teaching. The Association of Departments of English's new "Checklist and Guide for Reviewing Departments of English" is encouraging, as are the American Historical Association's 1983 suggested standards for "Preparation of Secondary School History Teachers" and the AACJC's draft policy statement on the humanities. Regional accrediting associations are, of course, also concerned with quality and with certifying it, but they cannot do the job by themselves because they operate at a level of great generality and visit campuses only once every five or ten years. It simply is not

realistic to expect them to do what professionals in the disciplines ought to do every day.

Third, we need to try to remember that markets are very unreliable in education and provide a particularly bad basis on which to plan educational programs. By the time a college has designed a new program, the edge on the market is often lost or the market itself has disappeared. Even whole institutions do not rise or fall in response to market factors in any predictable way. Witness the fact that there are now 600 more colleges in the United States than there were ten years ago, including twenty-two new ones created from 1980 to 1981, the single year in which the college-age population experienced its sharpest drop. Or contemplate the significance of the booming job market for Latin teachers in high schools in the southeastern and southwestern United States, a market that is so great that colleges in those regions are now beginning to use vocational arguments to persuade students to major in Latin! Markets, for better or worse, are very unreliable in education.

Fourth, we need to remember that schools and colleges have a symbiotic relationship. There can be no great universities without excellent schools. The expectations colleges have of entering students do influence the schools because college entrance requirements are de facto high school exit requirements. The impact of this relationship can be enormous. In Utah, for example, when the University of Utah introduced a foreign language entrance requirement, high schools all over the state immediately started teaching foreign languages, including those small rural schools that for years had claimed they had no money to do so. In Virginia, when members of the English faculty at the University of Virginia became so concerned about the quality of the statewide required eleventh-grade American literature course that they convened meetings with teachers, principals, and superintendents throughout the state, the result was not a set of abstract "objectives" or "competencies" for the course, but rather a recommended reading list that has been eagerly adopted by many of the high schools in the state. We need to acknowledge the great influence we in higher education have in shaping the humanities curriculum in elementary and secondary education.

Fifth, in any efforts to harness these trends we need to be much more open-minded about where our true professional self-interest lies. We have surprising allies. For example, in many states the efforts during the past few years to reform precollegiate education have been aided much more by idealistic and tough-minded governors than by teachers' organizations or, with regrettably few exceptions, by colleges and universities. Misperception of self-interest is not a new thing in the humanities, of course. Some no doubt remember bitterly that in the 1960s the effort to abolish college foreign language requirements was often led by — not acquiesced to, but led by — professors of foreign languages who

did not wish to be bothered teaching the basics of a language to apathetic conscripts. That, of course, turned out to be a particularly shortsighted version of self-interest.

If we fail to greet our allies with open arms, we risk considerable intrusion by state governments into the "regulation" of higher education. At the risk of appearing inconsistent, I nevertheless believe that the good effects of the state governments' vigorous involvement in efforts to improve the public schools are not likely to be duplicated in the colleges and universities. The fragile relationship between providing instruction and nurturing scholarship that typifies a good university is too easily damaged by outside regulation. But the sobering fact is that all of the recent reports that have criticized higher education have triggered favorable editorials in popular newspapers across the country. These editorials call upon local political leaders to act to improve higher education. It is noteworthy that the Bennett and AAC reports, which contain the harshest criticism of higher education, have reaped the greatest amount of editorial endorsement. If we are to avoid the anti-intellectual storm that these editorial clouds portend, we will need to establish terms of accountability for what we do that the public can understand and will therefore accept as credible.

The days of facile and superficial explanations for malaise in the humanities ought to be behind us. For example, one thing that is clear today in the effort to restore the humanities to health is that the sciences are not the enemy of the humanities. The sciences do not thrive at the expense of the humanities or vice versa. C. P. Snow's famous "two cultures" formulation simply does not apply to the world of humanities education. Every time that an educational reform movement has started in this country, often with the initial stimulus of a concern to improve education in mathematics and science, the humanities have been carried along. Efforts to improve education in the sciences and in the humanities are embraced equally by educators, parents, and public officials.

It is always dangerous to make predictions about the future (especially for a historian), but in concluding I will venture four. The first is to anticipate increasing emphasis on standards of educational achievement that go beyond assuring minimal competence and that actually work to measure students' proficiency at all levels. The foreign languages are, in fact, already active in the use of proficiency testing.

The second prediction is that inside universities and colleges more attention will be paid to general education, particularly efforts to give more definition to the core of common learning. The climate is right: 59 percent of all colleges have increased degree requirements in the past few years; 71 percent report that the atmosphere is now more favorable for additional increases than a few years ago.

A third prediction is that employers, governmental bodies, and others will increasingly expect colleges to serve society in certifying students' abilities and accomplishments. Those organizations that have performed these rating and ranking functions for themselves in the past decade, because they have believed that colleges were not doing it adequately, will begin again to rely on colleges and universities. In short, the terms of meritocracy will become educators' terms more than they have been for many years.

The fourth prediction requires no sophisticated actuarial analysis: if we expect to improve humanities education we will have to act very fast. Although there is momentum now for change, the fact is that the current period of introspection among educators was precipitated by a concern over the dismal fiscal and demographic decreases of the last few years. When these are reversed, we will lose the current focus on issues of quality and content in education. And as the baby boomlet — there is one, now about five years old —makes its way into the educational system, increasing effort and attention will be given to the need to produce new teachers, to build new schools, and to cope with questions of growth, while the other issues with which we are now so concerned will be abandoned. I predict, with deep regret, that our current concern with quality will be abandoned whether or not our efforts at reform have been accomplished, and whether or not those completed efforts have proved successful. In 1994 the college-age population in many parts of the country will return to a period of annual increases in size.

We can succeed in reasserting the integrity of the subjects of the humanities if we have the courage of our convictions about the importance of the humanities. We can use our own existing organizations and networks to work seriously to change the formal structures of education in order to provide what we believe to be good education. Recent experience shows, I think, that the futures of colleges and universities can be shaped to a much greater degree than we usually assume in our overly deterministic mind-set. We are not powerless victims of impersonal, social forces. We are the defenders of inexorable intellectual movements that ought to be able to withstand more transitory forces.

The Humanities and the Idea of Excellence*

Catharine R. Stimpson

TODAY, A NATIONAL argument is going on about the nature of the humanities and the idea of excellence. I support both the humanities and the idea of excellence. Indeed, who would not? However, I shall suggest, those of us who believe in the humanities will be in danger if we permit "excellence" to become a code word for support for narrow, rigid, and snobby notions of the humanities.[1]

Looming behind my suggestions is a perhaps surprising figure: that formidable philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. In 1885, he published his scabrous, scandalous polemic *Beyond Good and Evil.* There he distinguished between two varieties of philosophers. The first was a new species, the "attemptors" or the "experimentors," depending upon which translation one reads. The attemptors were, for Nietzsche, genuinely free thinkers. They were strong enough to comprehend pain; vast enough to comprehend the great; deep enough to comprehend the abyss; subtle enough to comprehend the delicate and tremulous; rare enough for the rare. They were the philosophers for the few.

Then, spreading scorn, Nietzsche pictured his second species: the "levellers." Levellers were deceptively free thinkers. Glib, facile, they believed in equal rights. They had democratic tastes. Falsely, they attributed human misery, not to the human condition, but to social structures. Compounding error with error, they then claimed that changing those structures would alleviate that misery. The levellers were the philosophers for the many.

In part, I am an attemptor. I doubt that any Utopian dream will ever be translated into an actual society that has no blood, no pain. However, I am far more a proud leveller. My belief in equal rights, and my democratic tastes, influence my reading of the relationships between the humanities in the United States and "excellence."

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In order to grasp those relationships, one must explore the concept of excellence itself. It is as pervasive an entry in our national dictionary as touchdown, pizza, computer, or freeway. Postage meters stamp out advertisements for books about excellence on packages from publishers.[2] Such frequency is ironic, for excellence, by definition, since Roman times, means something special, rare, unusually good. Kids know this when they exclaim happily, about an event, or a music videotape, "That's excellent." Necessarily, excellence — be it of doing or of being — is comparative. To know the special and the rare is to know the ordinary as well. To sense the unusually good is to juxtapose it against the merely good, or the bad. Kids know this, too, when they groan, "That's gross," about an event, or a music videotape, that has proved itself to be the antithesis of the "excellent."

Traditionally, humanists have claimed that we can discern what is excellent and what is not; that we can legitimately and usefully engage in such comparative judgments. This belief is implicit in a March 1983 memorandum, "Standards for the Review of Applications," from William J. Bennett, then chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, to NEH reviewers and panelists. He wrote: "We want to emphasize that the Endowment has sufficient funds to continue its policy of supporting all projects judged to be excellent. We also anticipate being able to provide funding for many projects deemed to be highly meritorious."

For many, excellence is a saving as well as a sorting principle. Some of us have wanted excellence to be a part of our lives, to give us standards to emulate and models to follow. Others of us have wanted excellence to organize the modern world; to help us preserve some cultural and moral authority against a chaos that we fear. Like Matthew Arnold, we have sought "touchstones." Our need has been particularly acute if we have thought of the modern world, not simply as fragmented, but as a mass industrial society, steeped in slack vulgarities, in shoddy mediocrities and commodities, which only the perverse or the stupid would call a "civilization."

Each of these two motives appears in a strange, appealing little book by a great humanist and humanitarian: Jane Addams. In 1932, she published *The Excellent Becomes Permanent*, a collection of memorial addresses for old friends whom Addams had met mostly through Hull House.[3] Her eulogies present them as ethical heroes who stand out in the modern world. Moreover, Addams suggests, if immortality is possible, they may survive, a bulwark against the flux of the secular, the scientific, the modern. The excellent will prove to be permanent.

Let us assume that the quest for excellence is legitimate. If we do so, two problems clamor for our attention. The fact that each is well known, even a

cliche, has not helped much in resolving them. The first asks if the celebration of excellence and of an egalitarian society are compatible. Can we nurture the outstanding person, or work, and social equality? Need social equality entail sameness?

I believe that the dream of a rough reconciliation of excellence and equality is neither playful nor phantasmagoric. Supporting my faith are three very different wrestlings with the problem. One is a text that was famous in the 1960s: John W. Gardner's *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent, Too?*[4] In retrospect, the book seems chatty, but sensible; conceptually naive, but good-hearted. Like the Kennedy administration of which he was a part, Gardner worries about both individual and social excellence, which seem inseparable. He is "concerned with the difficult, puzzling, delicate and important business of toning up a whole society, of bringing a whole people to that fine edge of morale and conviction and zest that makes for greatness." (p. xiii.) No crude Darwinian, he recognized the need for social justice in this invigorating process. "We must," he states, "seek excellence in a context of concern for us." (p. 77.)

Our task, Gardner continues, is to generate a society in which everyone will do something that everyone else recognizes as being excellent. Gardner clearly associates excellence with performance, with activity. We will honor the designer of a grand piano, its construction crew, its player, *and* its polisher — if they design, construct, play, and polish with discipline, spirit, fervor, and devotion. In brief, we will have a pluralistic approach to values. However, we will avoid chaos though a unifying commitment to that pluralism, ". . . a universally honored philosophy of individual fulfillment." (p. 134.)[5]

My second wrestling is not that of a thoughtful public servant, but of a sophisticated, talented writer of science fiction: Ursula K. LeGuin. In 1974, she published the morally charged novel *The Dispossessed.*[6] Her hero is a brilliant physicist, Shevek. He could as easily have been an artist or a writer or a scholar. What matters is the quality of his mind and character, not his academic discipline. He lives on Annares, a moon that a group of anarchists who believe in communal and egalitarian principles have colonized. Unhappy with the gap between theory and practice on Annares, intellectually and ethically stifled, he space-travels to Urras, the home planet of Annarians. Its major power blocs are allegorical representations of the Western industrial democracies, the U.S.S.R., and the countries of the Third World. Discovering that Urras is exploiting him, Shevek refuses to let it have his great scientific discovery. Instead, he broadcasts his equations to the entire galaxy and goes home to Annares, which can either revile him as a traitor or reform itself and welcome him.

LeGuin is skeptical about our capacities for genuine equality — even in places with egalitarian constitutions. Annares has hidden power structures,

cruel egocentrics, and a profound fear of the innovative individual who might be different and/or better than other citizens. However, LeGuin's skepticism does not lead to a preference for hierarchical societies, which can either legitimate inequalities or rationalize them away. Rather, she advocates a community devoted to total freedom of thought, expression, and experiment — as well as to communal obligations. Here, she suggests, the excellence of the past will flourish with the new, both necessary for human growth.

Still a third wrestling is by a young, but seasoned, public school teacher in the New York City system: Deborah Meier.[7] Devoted to the urban school, Meier also finds several of the recent attacks on the schools ill-conceived and, too often, ill-informed. Discussing them, she mentions studies about Head Start, a program to help less privileged children become more equal to the more privileged. It is possible that Head Starters, later on, did unusually well in what some call cognitive activities. In brief, efforts grounded in a commitment to equity can generate intellectual excellence.

The second of my two clamoring problems is conjoined to the first. How do we judge, know, and name the excellent — after we specify the arena of activity we are regarding? Some believe that such judgments are particularly difficult now because of the explosion of approaches in the humanities in the last two decades: women's studies, ethnic studies, black studies, the new social history, deconstruction. We have too many approaches in conflict, too much work to appreciate. However, such assertions confuse growth, which these fields represent, with fragmentation. A more realistic difficulty in the humanities exists because they evade two dominant methods of measuring success in modern America: the standardized, qualifying test and its business equivalent, the bottom line. Indeed, the humanities, an erratic profit center, resist standardized tests.

For the people who create the humanities — writers, artists, philosophers, historical agents — have talents that no quantifying test can extract. Would anyone render a verdict on Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Jefferson, Dickinson, Picasso, or Cather on the basis of college board scores? Moreover, people who respond to the humanities — scholars, students, critics, readers, thinkers, viewers, listeners — have capacities that no quantifying test can detect. They delight in instruction, and take instructions from delight. A person need not know Shakespeare's birthdate to weep because of King Lear on the bleak heath, or to laugh because of Rosalind in bosky Arden. Did the convicts in San Quentin, seeing *Waiting for Godot* in 1957, grasping it more deeply than the sophisticated West European audiences who first watched it, know that Beckett was an Anglo-Irishman born in Dublin in 1906?[8]

At present, the humanities confront two extreme, competing, non-quantifying ways of judging excellence. To oversimplify, the first claims that the

excellent is inherent in things. It pours out — like light from a lantern. Because of this, we can rank books, films, pictures, and values hierarchically. Perceiving canons, we can give some works more cultural authority than others, rather as people confer the title "Your Excellency" on persons of honor and rank. The second way, which has some roots in Nietzsche, claims that the excellent is something we have decided to call excellent for a number of ideological, social, and psychological reasons. We shine the light of approval on some works and not on others. Creating canons, we then submit to a cultural authority we have ourselves established, and cajoled and bullied others into accepting as well.

We must stumble in the ruts of each of these two ways. The first answer ignores the historical matrix from which judgments emerge, and through which they reproduce themselves. Works survive and gain esteem for reasons other than their intrinsic merit. Until recently, many people preferred *Walden Pond* to *The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass*, written within a decade of each other — for reasons that had more to do with the needs of twentieth-century United States culture than with Thoreau or Douglass.[9] Moreover, the craving for inherent, fixed standards of excellence often accompanies, though it need not, a desire for traditional patterns of political and social authority.

The trouble with the second way is that it doubts our capacity for making evaluations that are neither arbitrary nor spurious. At best, we become cultural relativists; at worst, we are as light as feathers in a dark abyss of ahistorical meaninglessness. To devise a curriculum, then, a practical necessity for people in education, is to risk fraud.

However, we need not choose either of these extremes. I wish to outline a third way that incorporates both our desire for excellence and our skepticism about that desire and its fulfillment. A first step is to become self-conscious about our use of language and of the word "excellence" itself. What *are* we saying when we say it? Such self-consciousness may be painful and alienating, but to undertake it has been a traditional task of the humanist.

What would we see if, for example, we were to look at *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*.[10] Issued in April 1983, it is a "Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education" from the National Commission on Education. Like John Gardner, it asserts that we can balance excellence and equity. However, far more urgently than Gardner, it warns us that "competitors throughout the world" are overtaking America's pre-eminence, that the now-famous "rising tide of mediocrity" is threatening to wash away our future. It defines the jetties of excellence we must now rebuild:

> At the level of the *individual learner*, it means performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in school and in the workplace. Excellence characterizes a *school or college* that sets high

> expectations and goals for all learners, then tries in every way possible to help students reach them. Excellence characterizes a *society* that has adopted these policies, for it will then be prepared through the education and skill of its people to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. [p. 12.]

Much of this, such as the tribute to self-development, is consistent with a prevailing, and admirable, United States ethic. However, the call for excellence interlocks with a vision of a competing, striving, struggling world in which self-development must "respond" to that competition, strife, and struggle. In brief, excellence is a weapon in a world in which Darwin would be more at home than Christ.

Probing the use of "excellence" unveils, not only some of the present pressures on the word, but how much its meaning has shifted over time. Like pyramids and papyrus, "excellence" is subject to historical vagaries. Think, for example, of the last act of *King Lear*. Lear enters, carrying the body of Cordelia. His heart as broken as her neck, he mourns: "Her voice was ever soft / Gentle, and low — an excellent thing in woman." We weep, but we no longer accept such an idea of excellence.

What idea, then, might we accept? What might distinguish the slogan "Have a nice day," in all its sweet vapidity, from a Shakespearean line? Surely the excellent offers a sense of complexity — of consciousness, of moral decisions, of historical acts, and of imaginative and aesthetic adventures. Next, this enactment, this representation, of complexities has one of two contrasting relationships to form, mode, or genre. Either it fulfills that form, as Eliot did with the moral and psychological novel, or it jars that form loose. Surprising us, the excellent plays with and alters its lineage, as Gertrude Stein and James Joyce did. In brief, excellence either most lucidly reveals the genetic make-up of a culture or acts as the quirky chromosome that signals the future. Finally, the excellent — whether we respond to it in the privacy of the mind or in the public space of a concert hall, a classroom, a museum — trains us in two necessary habits: interpretation and empathy, the attempt at understanding things outside the self.

A brilliant, witty new book about literacy, itself inseparable from any inquiry into the humanities, offers ideas compatible with my own. *On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock*[11] is by Robert Pattison, a Victorian scholar with training in the classics, who began his teaching in community colleges. When I read the book, I was in a receptive mood. For I had been marking student papers and applying stringent standards of technical excellence. "Logic," "faulty transition," "over-generalization," "incomplete citation," and "spelling" littered the students' margins like paper along a highway. However, I was ill at ease. Why was I bothering so about the comma splice? Was this really productive labor — for my students, for me? Would a

machine not be doing this in a few years? Was I not behaving like a knitting teacher before the Industrial Revolution?

Pattison confirmed my fears. We have, he claims, old-fashioned notions of what excellence in literacy is. Their guardians are the prissy grammarians: William Safire, John Simon, Edwin Newman. We must now recognize, as the Carolingian reforms did in 813, that we have two languages. One, standard English, is official; the other, an oral and lyric speech that music and the electronic media use, is vernacular. Our task is to teach standard English, because students need it, and yet to "encourage this new form. We should challenge it to be as conscious as it is vital." (p. 211.) In brief, we must retain a usable past, and develop the energetic complexities of the present.

Excellence in the humanities — the works themselves, and our study of these works — ought to reveal a pulsating alliance of consciousness and vitality. The quest for excellence will generate — not a monolithic tradition that we can organize into a hierarchy of excellent, meritorious, mediocre, and lousy — but a multiplicitous tradition that we will judge, enjoy, and judge anew. In 1866, Emily Dickinson wrote what we now refer to as Poem 1101. It declared:

> Between the form of Life and Life
> The difference is as big
> As Liquor at the Lip between
> And Liquor in the Jug
> The latter — excellent to keep —
> But for extatic need
> The corkless is superior
> I know for I have tried.

We in the humanities properly take the forms of life as our province. Our liquor in the jug is art, literature, history, philosophy, jurisprudence, and humanistic scholarship itself. All this is excellent activity. However, as a leveller, I remember the variety of jugs in the world, all excellent, from Ming china to muddy clay. Life overwhelms these forms, scatters and reshapes them. As it does, the process is burgeoning, untried, raw, but only that freshness redeems the articulation of excellence from arid pieties, and the humanities from arcane acts of cultural primogeniture.

Notes

[1]Contributing to that debate was Irving Howe, in a speech for a panel on "Excellence: Theory and Practice in the Humanities," January 27, 1984, which the New York State Council for the Humanities sponsored. Published in the *New Republic* (March 5, 1984), pp. 25-29, it provoked several responses, most notably Hilton Kramer's "Professor Howe's Prescriptions," *New Criterion* (April 1984), pp. 1-5.

[2]The publisher was Harper and Row, the book, Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence: Tips from America's Best-Run Companies.*

[3](Republished Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970).

[4](N. Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1961).

[5]At the risk of being unfair to Gardner, I want to point out a parallel between his theory of recognition and Andy Warhol's notorious crack that in the contemporary world, everyone will be famous — for fifteen minutes.

[6](N. Y.: Harper & Row, 1974; Avon Books, 1975).

[7]" 'Getting Tough' in the Schools," *Dissent* (Winter 1984), pp. 61-70.

[8]For details, see Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1961). pp. xv-xvii.

[9]The September 1983 *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 10, no. 1, has a number of theoretical and historical articles about canon formation and deformation. See, too, Paul Lauter, "Race and Gender in the Shaping of the American Literary Canon: A Case Study from the Twenties," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Fall 1983), pp. 435-63.

[10]Helene Moglen, "Erosion in the Humanities: Blowing the Dust from Our Eyes," *Profession 83* (N. Y.: Modern Language Association), pp. 1-6 has helped me here.

[11](N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1982). When one thinks about the globality of illiteracy, and about the fact that women are more apt to be illiterate than men, the debate about "excellence" often seems a digression from more ferocious problems.

Innovation and Tradition

Thomas V. Litzenburg, Jr.

ASSESSING THE CURRENT standing of the humanities requires both candor and courage. We are ill-served if we ignore the mounting evidence that all is not well in this particular precinct of our intellectual life. As teachers, scholars, and administrators, it behooves us to acknowledge that whatever may be amiss with the humanities only we can set right.

The signs that there is genuine cause for concern are all around us. The liberal arts in general and the humanities in particular have lost their place of pre-eminence in the undergraduate curriculum. Today, no more than 23 percent of our colleges and universities require courses in American history or literature for the baccalaureate degree; no more than 25 percent mandate a course in European history; no more than 15 percent insist that students demonstrate some acquaintance with the civilizations of Ancient Greece and Rome; and no more than half of our institutions of higher learning require a foreign language for graduation.

Disturbing as these statistics are, they pale in significance when compared with still others. While it comes as no surprise to be told that interest in the study of the humanities has declined, the actual figures continue to give us pause. The number of students majoring in English has dropped by 57 percent since 1970, in history by 62 percent, in philosophy by 41 percent, and in modern languages by 50 percent.

The reasons for this growing disaffection for the humanities are neither as numerous nor as various as some suppose. While we would like to believe otherwise, what has befallen the study of the humanities is largely of our own making. For the plain truth of the matter is that our schools and colleges have refused for far too long to state what it is that gets counted as higher learning. For our failure of nerve we have paid a price. Because we have been less than decisive in laying down the terms and conditions of serious learning, lamentations about our fallen estate evoke little sympathy. Instead, we are assaulted on every

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side, by friend and foe alike, while our convictions flag and our esteem slips. While this is our affliction, it need not remain so. Our malady admits of a remedy and a prescription lies ready at hand. We are both the physician and the patient, and it falls to us to administer the treatment as well as take the cure.

It is with both liberal learning and the humanities that we have to deal. For if we fail to define the domain of the former, we will lack the bearings we need to map the province of the latter. An education in the liberal arts and sciences that is worthy of the name is nothing less than an orderly introduction to a common intellectual and cultural heritage — to a tradition of learning that began with the Greeks and for more than two millennia has given the Western world the institutions, legal systems, values, and beliefs by which free men and women live. Liberal learning is as well the means by which we inculcate those intellectual skills and habits of mind without which no other learning is possible. By a disciplined engagement with the canon of the liberal arts we acquire and hone certain essential intellectual traits. As we learn how to learn, we come to understand more fully the distinction to be drawn between what is and what is not worth knowing. That — or so it seems to me —is what the tradition of liberal learning is about.

The liberally educated, then, are none other than those who have come into possession of a legacy of learning that is rightfully theirs. Armed with the intellectual tools needed to conserve their heritage, they are as well those who know how to read with discrimination and comprehension, write with precision and grace, speak coherently, reason logically, judge impartially, and live with ambiguity courageously. So described, one might conclude, as some most certainly have, that the liberally educated are increasingly in short supply.

The reason for such cynicism is not hard to find. It takes the form of a charge that, more often than not, is laid at the doorstep of our colleges and universities. Having removed most of the requirements for serious learning and lowered our expectations concerning those few that remain, the academy has no choice — the argument goes — but to accept responsibility for the consequences. If such a contention has any truth to it, then it is nowhere more to the point than with respect to the study of the humanities. The acknowledged core of the tradition of liberal learning, the disciplines of the humanities have all but lost their purchase on the minds of the young. While we may deplore the diminished standing of the humanities, we are bound to admit, as the president of Yale has noted, that it was "the humanists, not the hard scientists or social scientists," who twenty years ago "wrote the guidelines that displaced the requirements for a B.A., who eloquently undermined the writing and foreign language requirements, who instituted the grading reforms that, some would say, did nothing to discourage other pressures that were inflating grades."

President Giamatti's charge is a harsh one, but we should have the courage to hear it through to the end. He goes on to argue that no matter how we account for our capitulation,

> the fact remains that the humanists, self-proclaimed as central and vital links to all experience, displaced themselves, said they were not necessary to an ordered existence, even when that existence was only undergraduate education, much less society's stream of life. And in seeming to will themselves to the periphery, humanists made themselves in subsequent hard times perilously vulnerable.

An accurate portrayal, I should think, of the circumstances of academic humanists and the condition of the humanities during and since the decades of the sixties and seventies — painful to be sure, but accurate nonetheless.

What, then is to be said about the future of the humanities? You, I am told, are convened to discuss the prospects for innovation and change. While I would not presume to amend your agenda, I am inclined to say a word on behalf of the traditional and the enduring. In doing so I do not mean to make light of the ferment that informs current scholarship and teaching in the humanities and that has led some to hope that we soon will set aside the fragmentation and narrow specialization that for so long have marked humanistic studies. If this is what is meant by innovation and change in the humanities then my remarks may be taken as little more than an embellishment on an already familiar theme. If, however, I have failed to recognize the tune that humanists now are playing, my comments most likely will strike a dissonant note.

In reflecting on the state of the humanities, I have assumed that the role they play in our two- and four-year colleges is much the same — namely, to train and order the minds of the young and the not so young; to free people from provincialism and prejudice so that they might, in word and deed, serve the public good; to enlighten the uninitiated and point for them the way toward wisdom, the moral life, and civic purpose.

For those who argue that two-year colleges have little to do with the humanities because their primary concern is vocational training, I would reply that if there is a distinction to be drawn between "higher learning" and "higher skilling," the line of demarcation falls within and not between institutions. Just as community and junior colleges have embraced the humanities, so four-year colleges and universities have accommodated vocationalism. With few exceptions, learning and training, properly balanced, are the marks of both sorts of institutions. Moreover, since 87 percent of all the undergraduate credit hours earned in the humanities are taken during the first two years, it seems reasonable to assume that there is a common bond of interest among academic humanists in two- and four-year colleges.

That said, it remains the case that the mission and ethos of the two-year colleges are not those of four-year institutions. To what extent the differences between them inhibit or enhance the cultivation of the humanities is a matter about which I am not inclined to speculate. What I have to say about teaching and learning in the humanities is limited to what I take to be applicable to both our two- and four-year colleges.

I view the subject matter we call the humanities as that part of the tradition of liberal learning that has mainly to do with language, literature, history, and philosophy — that is, with the *studia humanitatis* as first and broadly defined by the Renaissance scholars who recovered and cultivated the learning of the Greeks and Romans. Generous to a fault perhaps, this perspective draws no hard and fast lines between the humanities, the arts, and, indeed, even the social sciences. It holds, instead, that whatever subject matter falls within the purview of the humanities will have something to do with the nature of man, the uses of languages, the interconnectedness of human experience, the place of values, the importance of first principles, and the significance of last things.

Described in this manner, courses in the humanities can be and, indeed, are taught with equal confidence and competence under a variety of disciplinary or interdisciplinary rubrics. But no matter the academic jurisdiction, such courses, to succeed, must share certain characteristics. Their subject matter must be of lasting value and worth the effort required to master it. With so little time to teach and learn, it is unconscionable to waste it on what is frivolous or incidental. We do the humanities no service by pandering to popular taste or seeking to disguise the seriousness of the subject matter they treat. Studying the humanities may well turn out to be pleasurable, but that does not mean we should advertise it as fun. That so much that finds its way into the humanities curriculum reflects the faddish only serves to remind us that conserving the canon of serious learning requires both expertise and vigilance.

What is read in the humanities should be a matter of some moment. While it is presumptuous to contend that the humanities are defined by a specific set of texts, the truth of the matter is that some works are more important than others. Certain books simply stand apart as milestones in the progression of human thought. Whether they are read ought never to be left to chance. The same, of course, can be said of what should be heard and seen, for much that is enshrined in the texts of the humanities was first sculpted, painted, constructed, or composed. Great artists, like great thinkers, have contributed in full measure to our cultural heritage; they, too, have left us a legacy to be conserved and nurtured.

Whatever else may be said about courses in the humanities, certain of them should be the province of only the most gifted and dedicated teachers. Contrary to a long-standing practice in the academy, it is the introductory rather than the

advanced course in the humanities that deserves the most resources and the finest talent. For it is here that most students will have their first and, perhaps, last formal engagement with the humanities. We would do well to ensure that they are taught by those who genuinely believe that *every* exposure to serious learning matters — but most especially the first. Indeed, no single reform would bolster the humanities more than a merit system that truly rewards those who excel at teaching what must be taught with inspiration.

The proper subjects, the best texts, and the most able teachers: these are the necessary if not sufficient conditions for learning in the humanities. But what of the students, you rightly ask. Surely, they must enter the equation. Discounting only the most indolent and indifferent among them, the answer, quite plainly, is that students count for everything. Offered half a chance to do so, they will, to the best of their ability, give to their teachers whatever is asked of them — provided they are persuaded that what they are enjoined to study is worth knowing. On this point I would not be misunderstood. It is not the duty of the student to love what must be learned; rather, it is the task of the teacher to bring about that small miracle. If the teacher should succeed then the student will soon be captive to the enchantments of serious learning. I realize that this is a proposition likely to stretch credulity. I make it not to challenge the prevailing consensus concerning the deficiencies that the current generation of students bring to their collegiate studies. I put it forward, instead, only to remind us that exceptional students are not the prerequisite for inspired teaching.

It well may be true that many of today's students bring to undergraduate work a singular inability to write with any facility, express themselves coherently, or argue effectively. It also may be the case that these very same students present themselves for instruction with a cultural perspective that is hopelessly parochial, a near-maddening preoccupation with the present, and an all-consuming concern with the vocational relevance of whatever they are taught. If, as many claim, this is the profile of more than a few undergraduates, then it is with just these students that we have to deal. For these are the students who genuinely need our help, who require of us our very best efforts, and who, in the end, may benefit the most from what the humanities have to offer.

To think otherwise is to believe of these students that they are untutored and undisciplined by choice, that they knowingly and freely have turned away from serious learning, and that they fully comprehend and willingly accept the loss that is theirs. Because none of this makes any real sense, we do well to ask why we so readily succumb to such an unhappy assessment of those we teach. Could it be that in our despair over what has befallen us as educators we are unable to distinguish cause from effect? Is it not possible that our students are being pushed and pulled by a society that has lost its moorings and whose vocational bias has run amuck? If so, then who is to lead them to a safe harbor?

Who is to give them the values and beliefs by which they might raise themselves above their concern for mere subsistence? Who is to show them that willful vocationalism is merely self-serving unless its pragmatism is harnessed to some larger civic purpose? Who is to tell them that the life most worth living is that of the mind? Who, in a word, is to teach them what it is that they do not know and about which they appear not to care?

We know the answers to all these questions and still, somehow, we are not consoled. We need, I think, to remind ourselves that, as teachers of the humanities, what we do must and does make a difference. Student attitudes and public opinion notwithstanding, there is no substitute in a democratic society for what it is that the academic humanist contributes to our common welfare. We must never be shy about claiming this to be so. The learning embodied in the humanities is the stuff of which democracies are made and by which they are sustained. It was Jefferson who made this point succinctly and well when he said that "if a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." The ignorance that freedom cannot abide and the democratic state cannot endure is that which humane learning alone can combat. The worth of the humanities, then, can never be overestimated, and the calling of those who teach humane studies can never be less than a noble one.

That there are those who question the purposes of liberal learning and the study of the humanities is a truth so painfully obvious that only a fool would deny it. That those who inhabit the world of serious learning would allow themselves to be intimidated by the misperceptions and criticisms of others is less than understandable. Rather than succumb to self-doubt and call our fundamental convictions into question, ours is the task of showing others that they can never do for themselves what it is we are able to do with and for them. While truth is on our side it will count for little until and unless we bring the critic to see that this is so. It is here that conviction must be accompanied by courage, for what now is asked of academic humanists is that they teach what must be taught to those who will have no inkling of its worth until they begin to grasp what it is they do not know. The time is gone — if ever such a time there was — when those who teach the humanities could assume that they were preaching to the converted. Because almost nothing can be assumed, everything must be taught. Plainly put, both the future of the humanities and the well-being of those who teach them rests with no one other than ourselves.

I began by arguing that the humanities stand at the very center of a tradition of learning from which it is unimaginable that we should be separated and remain who we are. I would end by saying why it is that I believe this to be so. Humane studies are those forms of inquiry and knowledge that revolve around the written and spoken word, around texts and their interpretations. They are

bound one to another and to the whole of liberal learning by what President Giamatti calls the "ligatures of language." Thus, it would seem that it is the mastery of language that is first required of those who would take up the study of the humanities. But not quite so, for it is only through an acquaintance with the humanities that we come to understand the richness and significance of language.

If we understand the humanities to be at the center of our cultural heritage and if that heritage is both shaped and conveyed by language, it follows that you cannot have cultural literacy without linguistic literacy. However, because language is never used without a context that gives it both form and meaning, reading and writing are not just linguistic skills. Cultural understanding and language use are inseparable; you cannot have the one without the other. Plainly put, the forms of our language are the forms of our culture. We know this to be so whenever we fail in our efforts to understand cultures other than our own. Their distinctiveness is hidden from us unless and until we succeed in mastering the languages in which their heritages have been shaped and given meaning.

Although he once thought otherwise, E. D. Hirsch makes precisely this point when he argues that "what chiefly counts" in gaining some competence in reading and writing "is the amount of relevant prior knowledge that readers [and writers] have." Literacy, in a word, is synonymous with acculturation, or, put another way, cultural literacy is the achievement of those who have learned to read and write in accordance with the standards set by the canonical texts of their society.

In answer, then, to the question by what measure are we to assess the literacy and learning of those whom we presume to call educated, our response is bound to be much the same as that put forward by the humanist scholars of the Renaissance. For them, the educated were those who had studied grammar, rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy by reading the Greek and Roman texts, and who, in what they wrote, said, and did, displayed the wisdom they had acquired and demonstrated its utility for the greater public good. While our canonical texts are more encyclopedic than theirs and our definition of the subject matter more generous, we share the Renaissance view that it is cultural literacy to which we aspire, and, therefore, there can be no learning more important to society than that afforded by the study of the humanities.

To return to Giamatti one last time, it surely is the case that

> all of us are what we say we are — that as individuals and as a people we define through language what we have, and what we will be, and that a group of people who cannot clearly and precisely speak and write will never be a genuine society. We shape ourselves and our institutions, and we and our institutions are shaped, through individual acts of negotiation between

> ourselves and our language. Without a respect for its awesome power we can never find out who we are.

It would be hard to improve on such an eloquent and forceful defense of the humanities, and I would not presume to try. This much only would I add — that unless by their words and deeds humanists make just this sort of case for the enduring worth of the humanities and the cultural tradition they embody, it is unlikely that others will be able or willing to do so on their behalf.

On the Importance of History in the Curriculum

William R. Cook

TEACHERS OF HISTORY are constantly reminded of the declining interest in their subject. A popular song of a few years ago begins, "Don't know much about history," and it is not a lament. The decline in history enrollments in colleges and the preference of high school students for psychology and sociology electives in the social studies have become commonplace. Most educators continue to say that they believe in the importance of the study of history, but I am often struck by the lack of conviction both in their words and deeds. Certainly, some defend the importance of history, especially American history, as a course to prepare students for citizenship, although that often means learning not to question certain assumptions rather than a free inquiry into the American experience. Some regard history as a data base for more "useful" subjects — embracing the notion that the history teacher's purpose is to dispense facts; for them history provides background information. This view of history-as-background is closely related to the view that the study of history allows one to drop a name or date to impress others, almost as if the purpose of historical inquiry were to train students for Jeopardy or Trivial Pursuit. I once even encountered the idea that a history teacher is a kind of travel agent. At a wedding reception, a stranger asked about my profession. When I responded that I teach European history, she responded: "Oh, you're one of the ones who tells our children what to see when they go to Europe." I wondered at the time whether I went to graduate school for all those years in order to make sure that my students went to the cathedral of Notre Dame as well as the Follies Bergeres.

Many public school systems and college history departments claim to have turned away from the idea that history is a body of information to be remembered, but in fact that view of history is still quite prevalent. From my rather unscientific sampling of secondary schools, I have come to the conclusion that most testing requires primarily quick recall of specific facts and that most textbooks attempt an essentially factual presentation of the past.

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After fifteen years of college teaching (including teaching at Attica Prison) and a lot of experience with secondary schools and teachers, I have come to the conclusion that most of us are forgetting some of the main reasons for teaching about the past. I do not want to deny that it is important for students to have an overview of our and other civilizations or that they need to have command of certain pieces of information. Nor do I want to deny that the particular study of American history is important because it prepares students for citizenship in our democracy. However, these traditionally given reasons are not the only ones that we should keep in mind, and they may not be the most essential ones. I believe that history is the discipline in which certain methods of inquiry can best and most effectively be taught. Certainly, one can make the argument that if students can find, read, and make sense out of several diverse texts relating to an event, issue, or institution, they can reasonably inquire about contemporary issues. This approach to history encourages students to search for relevant materials, look for and identify point of view and bias, distinguish between fact and interpretation, recognize the difference between argument and assertion, understand cause and effect, and synthesize diverse viewpoints and apparent contradictions into consistent narrative and comprehensive patterns of interpretation. This kind of study also teaches a healthy skepticism of easy and obvious explanations and requires that students look beyond facile, single-factor explanations.

Alas, very few high school and introductory college courses take this sort of approach. One reason is the passion that history teachers have to make sure that students are exposed to all aspects and major personalities of the period being studied. We all feel some embarrassment when a student completes a course with us and has not mastered all the basic information in the textbook. There will always be a parent, colleague, or supervisor who will say that obviously Professor Smith is a bad teacher because students who had his/her course say they never "covered" William McKinley or Denis Diderot. Ultimately this kind of fear, real or imagined, leads us to teach broadly defined courses from the data-base approach. I recall my college biology course. We learned countless terms, but even as a college freshman I thought that the course was only valuable to those who were going to continue their study of biology and that a much better course could have been designed for those of us who were not pre-meds or budding botanists. Similarly, we need to recall our audience and the fact that we are not training historians in high school and college survey courses. We are not primarily establishing a vocabulary and chronology for future professionals in the field; rather we are teaching vital research and analytical skills and providing a historical framework and perspective that is useful for any thinking person, be that person a steelworker or a senator.

I recently taught an issues-oriented "Western Civilization to 1600" course and did not discuss either the fall of the Roman Empire or the Protestant

Reformation. I confess to feeling uneasy about not giving even coverage to all the major movements and events from Hammurabi to *Hamlet*. My students and I examined in some depth source materials and modern interpretations of four major issues or topics, ranging from the theory and practice of Athenian democracy to the nature of the family in Renaissance Florence, using data processed by computers. I believe that my students, almost none of whom were history majors, left that course better able to inquire about the past and therefore also about the present. They are aware of the range of questions historians address and how the historical dimension of an issue illuminates our experience both individually and as a nation and a culture. Ultimately, I do not think that I did those students an injustice by not listing ten major causes for the fall of Rome or giving a detailed chronology of the birth of Protestantism.

Obviously, if history is to teach students how to inquire, they must seriously engage primary sources. Most textbooks pay lip service to primary texts by quoting a few lines from the Funeral Oration of Pericles and the *Song of Roland*, but these are often set off from the narrative and essentially serve as window-dressing, much like most photographs do. Often students see these snippets and photographs as relief from the "real" reading, and it is not uncommon for students to treat them as something to skip entirely. A few lines of primary material are not sufficient, for one of the skills to be gained from studying the past is to learn to distinguish the significant from the less significant and the insignificant. In broad survey texts with snippets of sources, every statement appears to the student to merit equal attention. I have seen more than one textbook in which a diligent student has streaked virtually every line with yellow magic marker. When reading primary texts under the direction of a skilled teacher, a student quickly begins to make distinctions, since not all statements are equally true, useful, or important. And this kind of skill is essential for living in our complex world. Where people are bombarded with far too much information to absorb, let alone retain, citizens must have some criteria in order to be able to distinguish what is valuable and useful from what is not.

Some historians think that students should not seriously be introduced to primary materials until far advanced in their studies. For example, the eminent historian Joseph Strayer writes in the introduction to the bibliography of his text *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: A Short History*: "No translations of source materials are listed here, since most of them are not very interesting to or easily understood by readers who are acquainted only with the broad outlines of medieval history." Strayer is suggesting that one needs to be initiated by historians living in the modern world before the stuff of history is accessible, intelligible, or interesting. This makes "real" history the preserve of the world's few professional historians and turns graduate school into a kind of rite of passage. Strayer and the many historians who agree with him would deprive

high school and college students of the opportunity to learn what the stuff of history is (as opposed to what happened in the past) and what historians do. This view also gives more authority to modern scholars than they deserve; generally, I think that contemporaries of the period being studied speak quite well for themselves without the necessity of always mediating what they say through modern scholarship, however good and useful that scholarship is. To deny students access to primary materials or even to discourage them from seeking out the record of the past keeps students from learning the tools by which to test what modern interpreters have to say about the evidence. Ultimately, if Strayer's view prevails, very few students will learn anything about "doing history" and will instead be encouraged or perhaps doomed to accept a prepackaged, hermetically sealed view of the past.

I believe that we must move away, in both high schools and colleges, from the idea that history is fundamentally a story, a narrative of events, although few would deny that narrative is an important form of historical writing. It has been almost fifty years since the publication of Marc Bloch's *Feudal Society*, a recognized classic that demonstrated how history can be done without a significant narrative component; yet many teachers and most students seem, at least in the classroom, to ignore the historiographical achievements of Bloch and many other important historians of the twentieth century. Without denying the importance of being able to narrate, I suggest that teaching history at least in part from some non-narrative orientation gives students the opportunity to develop important analytical skills. I submit that if students can look at a series of documents and learn how to make sense of them, they will also be more likely to make sense of newspapers, magazines, documents, lectures, television programs, and other sources of knowledge about the present. Students will have to learn to develop good questions by finding the central issues, to define and recognize different perspectives on those issues, and to evaluate statements in order to choose a position to defend as truth. Students with this kind of experience will be prepared to distinguish between genuine and false arguments and will possess those skills most needed in our society — skills that allow for informed and independent judgment.

Another major function of the study of history in schools and colleges is for students to learn the value of history and therefore of historians to society. One often hears politicians say that history will judge their deeds; but that is false, for history judges nothing. Historians judge! There are two major facets of teaching the importance of historians. The first is to look at the writings of modern historians whose research provides valuable insight into the human condition and thus into the contemporary world. It is easy to think of historians like Eugene Genovese or Michael Kammen, who write about the American experience. Let me offer a less obvious example. I find that David Herlihy's

studies about the family in Renaissance Italy, for which he used the most modern methods of research, including computer technology, provide a useful perspective on issues concerning the family in our society as well as helping us to understand a period quite different from our own. I have never taught a student who was not fascinated by his pamphlet, "The Family in Renaissance Italy."[1] This work is short, clear, and straightforward. Why do we subject our students to often sterile textbooks, generally at least a generation behind the most exciting research, when we could furnish them, at least as a supplement to a narrative text, with works which explore informational, methodological, and analytical frontiers such as the Herlihy pamphlet? And, conversely, why do more historians not take on the responsibility to present their research — often funded at least in part by the taxpayers — to audiences beyond the few hundred specialists in their field? And why do publishers not offer a wider variety of formats for historical writing? I am impressed by a "Teach Yourself History" series published in England about two decades ago. Some of the greatest historians wrote short books without professional jargon or complicated scholarly apparatus that presented their many years of research in a format designed for a wide audience. It does not speak well for professional historians in this country that nothing like that series exists here. Not only do many scholars scorn "popular" works and many departments not take that sort of publication seriously when making personnel decisions, but history teachers in the United States do not seem to have created a public informed and interested enough to create a demand for good popular history from our best historical minds.

A second way for us to teach the value of historians to our students is to have them read the classic works of history. I find it unfortunate that few students in history classes at any level read about the Peloponnesian War from Thucydides or about Hannibal crossing the Alps from Livy or the Christianization of England from Bede. To replace these masterworks with often insipid accounts in modern textbooks is analogous to replacing the reading of Shakespeare in an English course with plot summaries. Obviously, no one thinks that students should read *about* literature rather than experience the literature itself; yet systematically in history courses, students only read about history in the sense of reading summaries of what great historians have written (usually factual summaries without the accompanying analysis that makes historians important and interesting commentators about society). Most texts merely mention the great historians of the time being discussed without so much as a hint about what makes them great historians. Students of Greek history will have impressed on them the greatness of Plato or Sophocles much more than the greatness of Thucydides; however, I am convinced that the *Peloponnesian War* is as perceptive and valuable a text as the *Republic* or *Antigone*. I teach sections of my college's required humanities course, which includes about 100 pages of Thucydides. My students learn more about the historian's craft and

function in society from that 100 pages than they would learn from any number of pages of a textbook, no matter how comprehensive and well written it may be. I recently assigned a paper in which I asked students to analyze the situation in Lebanon from a Thucydidean perspective, focusing on what he had to say about the civil war in Corcyra. I received a number of insightful papers and a lot of positive comments about the assignment. Thucydides turns out to be, in the minds of many of my students, an important writer whose perspective on events in Greece two and a half millennia ago has some transcendent value; and since he is seen to be important, students begin to realize that historical writing and thus historians can and should play important roles in society.

Textbooks, especially at the secondary school level, often claim to be value-free. Of course, no history book is value-free. The very choices of what events or snippets of sources to include are based on the writer's values. Even the selection of photographs is an expression of values; the fact that every textbook shows Florentine art of the Renaissance but often not works from Siena reflects a rather Whiggish view of art history rather than a purely objective selection. Many authors tend not to make historical judgments directly or discuss values, perhaps in part because modern historians often fear charges of subjectivity and also because some textbook selection committees avoid controversial books. Yet what we need in order to make history as useful as possible is books by historians — old and new — that attempt to evaluate and judge actions, institutions, and ideas. Of course, judgments presented can and should be debated and carefully scrutinized, but that too is part of the excitement and importance of historical study. However, the use of a bold work of historical interpretation requires a knowledgeable and skilled teacher who knows how to find the presuppositions of the author, distinguish between fact and interpretation, and examine the author's fairness in his/her use of evidence.

Let me give two examples from ancient history that illustrate the kinds of historical experiences I would like students to have. Plutarch tried to re-create the thought process of Julius Caesar as he stood on the banks of the Rubicon. This is a masterful passage, an example of historical imagination — not at all a pejorative word when applied to historical writing — at its best. Through Plutarch, we have the opportunity to think through the alternatives Caesar had and perhaps to discover the basis for his decision to cross the Rubicon and attack Pompey. Any textbook will tell that Caesar crossed the Rubicon, and a good one will attempt to explain why he did so and what the consequences of that act were; but only a great historian like Plutarch explains to us that there were alternatives and how Caesar may have made his decision. Plutarch tries to show us the crossing of the Rubicon "from the inside." Only when we have the kind of perspective that Plutarch gives us in this instance can we intelligently and usefully make any judgments other than purely practical ones such as whether

Caesar had the resources to be successful. Plutarch's account gives us the opportunity, indeed practically demands, that we discuss the moral dimension. Furthermore, this passage in Plutarch raises important historiographical questions. How did Plutarch, writing more than a century later, know what Caesar thought as he stood on the banks of the Rubicon? Is there any way to test his re-creation of the event? Can we at least state that Plutarch's narrative is plausible based on Caesar's own writings and other things we know about him?

Everyone studies Athenian democracy, and it is generally presented as the best system of government that the ancient world produced and as the genesis of American democracy. Both of these claims *may* be true, but some very smart Athenians such as Thucydides, Socrates, and Plato had doubts about the effectiveness and justice of democracy as a form of government. I think that we should be anxious to know what Athenians thought of their form of government, whether favorably disposed to it or not. We should want to scrutinize their institutions and even their theory of democracy rather than routinely praising the Athenians for being like us (which they clearly were not). The more fundamental the questions raised in the study of history, the greater the likelihood that our students will be able to recognize common assumptions in our own society, and that is a prerequisite for questioning and improving on them. As a footnote, let me point out that our Founding Fathers were not at all attracted to Athenian democracy and created a form of government for us which looked much more to the Republic of Rome than it did to Periclean Athens.

As a medievalist, I am compelled to comment upon one other mistaken assumption that is widely held concerning the teaching of history — that the more modern the history, the more useful it is. There are, of course, some ways in which modern history is more immediately applicable to current events. However, reducing premodern history to the status of an overture, however pleasant or bizarre, distorts the value of studying the past. The causes of the bias toward modern history are manifold. Most teachers in schools and colleges are better prepared in modern history because many colleges, especially those that have traditionally educated teachers, have staffs with a modern orientation. I teach in a college that was created to train teachers; when I joined a fifteen-person department, I was the only one whose area of specialization was before the eighteenth century. Another reason for the emphasis on recent history is that many standardized tests, from the New York Regents examinations to the history GRE, emphasize modern history, thus in a real sense dictating a value judgment to teachers who feel an obligation to prepare their students for these tests. Of course, there is nothing wrong with the study of modern history; students obviously need to know about Vietnam and the emerging nations of the Third World and McCarthyism. However, in some ways it is easy for students to

study recent history without developing a real historical perspective. For example, it is easy to study the Great Depression, believing that the world was pretty much like the world is now. Oh, people dressed funny and liked odd-sounding music. But there were Republicans and Democrats, Wall Street, the *New York Times*, concerns with totalitarian regimes in Europe, and Fords and Chevys. However, it strikes me that the world in the 1930s was quite different —no television or satellite communications, no nuclear threat or nuclear power, no Jewish state in the Middle East, the Belgian Congo and Rhodesia rather than Zaire and Zimbabwe, legal segregation, Amos 'n' Andy, masses only in Latin, and burlesque halls. Making students aware of important differences and thus teaching a historical perspective is a subtle and difficult task. But when students study the Middle Ages, for example, they are forced right away to deal with a world view different from their own. Students are quickly brought into contact with a world in which people walked a thousand miles to pray at the tomb of a saint, monks were consulted on all kinds of issues, 90 percent of the population was directly engaged in cultivating the land, and so forth. Students are required to look at the "differentness" and the fact that this strikingly different civilization produced some extraordinarily creative intellectual and institutional responses to political, social, and moral problems, many of which are not unique to the Middle Ages. Furthermore, a study of the Middle Ages leads to an examination of change because our culture has medieval culture as its direct ancestor and yet is quite different from it.

The knowledge of and respect for the values and institutions out of which our civilization emerged have important consequences, for we live in a world in which we are becoming increasingly aware of the existence, creativity, and genius of other cultures and traditions in places as far removed as Burma and Benin or as close as the Creek and Crow reservations. I am not suggesting that the study of the distant past teaches tolerance, a word we often use to mean putting up with inferiors, but rather real respect, admiration, and appreciation for other ways the art of being human has been experienced. Thus, medieval civilization contributes to an understanding of contemporary Western civilization while it also helps us to recognize that different traditions which exist today have a lot to contribute to the enrichment of our culture, institutions, and values.

Of course, it is impossible for the study of ancient and medieval history to serve this function unless students know something of these other traditions in their own right. Consequently, it is imperative that we develop a plan throughout a student's education from first grade through college to teach students about these other cultures. I am not talking primarily about exploration and imperialism. Rather, I believe that we should teach about East Asia, the Islamic World, Africa, Latin America, et cetera in the same ways I suggest we teach about Europe and the United States. We should let Confucius and the Koran be

part of the materials of our teaching just as we should read Thucydides and the Constitution of the United States. It is irresponsible to be educating people who already live in an international community, which many have come to call a global village, without instructing them about the great majority of human experience and depriving them of the possibility of learning from as well as about the people with whom we share this planet.

I find it unfortunate that the study of history has been traditionally lumped with other disciplines, especially in primary and secondary schools, into what is called social studies. In many places, the word "history" is scarcely to be found in the curriculum and has been replaced with "social studies" or "culture studies." One problem with placing history with the social sciences in the curriculum is that it is often used as a means to introduce students to the "more relevant" social sciences. Another problem is that while history has some canons for research and writing and evaluating evidence, social studies has none, since it is not a discipline at all but only a collection of rather different disciplines. I want to see *history* taught as history. Furthermore, the curriculum should reflect history's close relationship with the other humanities disciplines — philosophy, language and literature, religion. Despite much exciting and fruitful historical research that has been conducted using methods developed by social scientists, history is in purpose essentially much more like the study of literature than, for example, the study of psychology. When historical information is presented as a way to introduce students to the social sciences, students are deprived of careful consideration of the humanities and their importance in the modern world, for humanities education is often left solely to literature teachers, who also have the responsibility to teach reading, spelling, writing skills, et cetera, and whose discipline is not synonymous with the humanities.

Another problem in placing history with the social sciences and using its subject matter to teach sociology, economics, and so on is that many who teach such courses are not trained in the study of history. No one thinks it would be acceptable for someone with no formal education in chemistry or English or Spanish to teach those subjects; yet — if I may look to secondary education for a moment — in many states it is still possible to be certified as a social studies teacher and to teach historically oriented courses without having taken a single history course at the college level. If our certifying agencies do not take history any more seriously than that (the "anyone can teach history" approach), why should students think that history is of central importance in their education and an important part of their preparation for adulthood and for citizenship? We need to return to the study of history, and we need it taught by people educated in the field of history.

When students tell me that they don't like history, I tell them that I don't believe them because I don't think they know what history is. Most of my

students have never studied history at all in high school, but rather were given something not very interesting which masquerades as history. After all, won't most people be interested in studying a subject that uniquely prepares them to inquire about and find answers to a vast array of political, social, intellectual, moral, and personal issues that they will have to deal with? And what reasonable person would deny the importance of reading works of history that provide insightful commentary on the human condition? It is time that we go beyond changing the semantics of studying history and stop allowing our students to be denied skills and insights and pleasures that the study of history uniquely makes available to them. We must fundamentally alter the way we teach history and how we educate those who will do that teaching and courageously redefine its role in the education of a free person.

Note

[1]13 pp. Forum Press, 1974.

Liberal Arts Across the Curriculum: The Basis for Education

Richard A. Wright

THE AMERICAN SYSTEM of higher education is on the brink of disaster, not because it is unused, but because it is in an ill-considered, headlong rush to turn itself into a system not of education but of technical training, whose graduates are illiterate to the world of ideas. American colleges, both two-year and four-year, are rapidly turning into a system for the narrow technical training of the "professional," geared toward the boom in technology and its related service industries. As a result, students take fewer and fewer courses outside their area of training and avoid liberal arts courses as much as possible. In short, a college degree in the 1980s is increasingly two to four years of intense specialization.

Within the past year, however, following several different reports showing the deficiencies of American education,[1] people have cautiously begun to think about "liberal arts" and "humanities" as perhaps having some relevance to the technical trend noted above. This paper is intended to encourage that thinking by clarifying the term "liberal arts," by showing where the liberal arts fit into technical education, and by showing how philosophy is an important part of that education.

First, the term "liberal arts" does not properly refer only to a specific set of courses in one particular college or division, even though most liberal arts course work is done in that context. "Liberal arts" refers first and foremost to an attitude or frame of mind, to the basis we employ to think about the world. In this sense, the term "liberal" reflects an eclectic openness of thought, an attitude encompassing the broadest possible approach to understanding. People who are liberal in this sense will then make every effort to open their thinking to new and diverse ideas, accepting the possibility that cherished beliefs have as much chance of failing as being supported. People who are liberal in this sense will not

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be confined to a specific discipline for their ideas, but will search out and welcome a different perspective, recognizing there the possibility for broader understanding. People who are liberal in this sense will openly welcome analysis and criticism of their views, recognizing that the dialectic of critical analysis is the only real means we have of achieving true knowledge. And people who are liberal in this sense are those for whom ideas, and the exchange of ideas, constitute the basic stuff of intelligent life.

The "arts" in "liberal arts" does not specifically refer to painting or music, but instead to the general characteristics of thought that are embodied in those activities. First and foremost, the arts are creative. Bringing from the intellect something new and different, they make possible an application of ideas which is not directly given by experience, but which requires a reconstruction of experience, a molding of experience through the inner vision of the thinker. Second, the arts embody a reliance on thinking as a basis for the expression of both ideas and emotions. Finally, the arts embody the recognition that nothing is forever set; as Heraclitus observed so many centuries ago, "Everything flows and nothing abides, everything gives way and nothing stays fixed. It is in changing that things find repose."[2] People who embrace the liberal arts in this sense will constantly strive to interpret, not place fixed values upon the experiences of life. People who practice the liberal arts in this sense will utilize and seek to expand their creative talents, recognizing that the development of one's ideas and knowledge is a never-ending task.

It is not an accident that terms of activity, rather than specific courses, have been used here to describe and discuss the liberal arts. For the liberal arts are a general embodiment of characteristics of thought and action which, together, nourish and utilize the creative, eclectic, and broadening capacities of human reason to deal with the world in which we all live. That certain courses and disciplines are regularly associated with the liberal arts is simply a quirk of our human need to compartmentalize. In fact, it has only been within this century that education has become so appallingly narrow. The reason most often given for this narrowness is that our knowledge in any field (e.g., biology, engineering, education et cetera) has become so extensive that no one can keep up, let alone be an expert in more than one field; our knowledge is too vast to do anything but specialize. It does not follow from this fact, however, that people should study nothing more than one discipline, nor that the concept of liberal arts described above applies only to those disciplines traditionally labeled "liberal arts" or "humanities." To see why this is so we need to turn for a moment to the role of science and technology in contemporary education.

There is no questioning the fact that this is a high-technology era in which human values play a distant second fiddle to developing the economy and living the good life. Science, both hard and soft, has become the god of this society,

and it is to science that we instinctively turn for answers to significant questions. Unfortunately, acceptance of science and technology as the basis for knowledge is predicated upon the mistaken view that science and technology are somehow value-free, thus objective and universal. Technical training lends support to this appearance of value neutrality and objectivity, through the "unified" front of one viewpoint presented in most textbooks and the "factual content" of the disciplines involved.

The mistake here lies in failing to recognize that science and technology are as value-laden as anything else in our lives. What we study, and how we study it, are both functions of individual or social values; what we do, and how we do it, are also based upon our values.[3] True, the mathematics of science are value-free, but what we see and how we see it, thus to what we apply the mathematics, are inexorably woven with our values. The objectivity of science and technology is a smoke screen which hides the value basis of those endeavors and prevents our examination of the fundamental value implications of their results.

Our love affair with high technology and our failure to recognize its value base have been good excuses for abandoning the liberal arts approach to education. We now push for a high degree of specialization and promote a calculative view of the world. To paraphrase David Hume, in modern idiom, "If it won't go into a spread-sheet, it isn't worth thinking about." But it is not calculation that is the problem, for, as Aristotle observed, "It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things."[4] The problem is that we have lost sight of the qualifier he added, that the precision must be "just so far as the nature of the subject admits." Our educational system seems bent on making students uneducated by pressing for ever-greater precision without ever thinking about whether such precision is appropriate. We are blithely substituting specialization and calculation for the development of intellect, judgment, and character.

Of equal concern is that in this emphasis on specialization and calculation we overlook the simple fact that intelligent judgment in human affairs requires what Aristotle called "practical wisdom." Just about anyone can calculate or recite theory; what we need, however, are people who can make judgments about the calculations, and, more importantly, decisions about the value implications of applying the theories to human beings.

The push for a high-tech society, coupled with an emphasis on cost effectiveness in our institutions, has drawn us further and further away from education and more and more into training. As a result, our students have increasingly sophisticated technical knowledge but know little or nothing about themselves or the world outside their profession. John H. Kilwein, a professor of pharmacy at the University of Pittsburgh, clearly identifies the problem in a recent article on health care education:

> I am always amazed at how many students in the health professions have the idea that all important questions can be related to health and should be cast within the scientific framework and solved by quantified research. One of the reasons that this simply is not so is that many of the questions facing the health professions today are questions of social philosophy and ethics, not science.[5]

John B. Slaughter concurs, arguing that "we must have experts who understand the social and philosophical consequences of their work. We [as teachers] must be much more aggressive in making the connections."[6] And making those connections is precisely the role of the liberal arts in education.

How did we reach this predicament? There are two basic reasons: first, an emphasis on technical specialty promotes a mistaken conception of what teaching and learning entail; and, second, this mistaken conception of teaching and learning leads to the replacement of education by training. Let us look briefly at each of these reasons before moving on to ways in which the liberal arts may help resolve the identified problems.

Today's undergraduate is intent upon a "career" whose primary evidence is a college degree, which is believed to certify competence to practice some profession or other. As our educational institutions shift their emphasis toward expanding colleges and programs which meet this perceived student need, the students become increasingly seen in a passive role. That is, the primary question is "What courses do I need to get a degree in _____ ?" where the blank is filled by whatever one wishes. Interpreted, this question generally means "What do I have to know to count as qualified to do _____ ?" where the blank is the verbal form of the blank above.[7] Because students are asking these questions, colleges think they need to answer them, never suggesting that the questions are wrong-headed. For if the questions are accepted as legitimate, then teaching is reduced to little more than choosing the correct item for learning and giving it to the student for internalization. The student becomes a spectator, waiting to be acted upon in a way that results in learning what needs to be known; learning then is seen as a passive enterprise, wherein the student gets what the teacher gives. Going to class is like watching television, except the professor is live; the script is the professor's lecture notes; and courses are selected like TV programs, by skipping around until something of interest is found.

Contrary to this is the liberal arts notion of learning, where learning is seen as active, not passive. In fact, it is interactive. The instructor and the student together follow a path of inquiry in which both are participants. To see the student as a passive receptor of knowledge erroneously makes knowledge appear as if it may be given, as a gift. To gain knowledge a person must instead search, question, and criticize; questions must be asked, answered, and

questioned; answers must be questioned and criticized; the instructor may learn, and the learner may teach. As free inquiry is essential to learning, so too is it essential to teaching. Our current practice of allowing accrediting agencies to establish a predetermined set of activities that constitute a degree program reinforces television learning of a specific program content. When that happens, learning is not taking place, and the student is not being educated. Instead, the student is being trained to perform certain skills, albeit highly sophisticated skills. We are producing, in Aristotle's terms, not people with wisdom but simply artisans.[8]

An artisan is one who knows how to use a thing, what it is used for, how it works, and in a minimal way, perhaps, how to teach others its use. The person of knowledge, the wise person, knows this and something more — why it works as it does, and, most importantly, how it relates to other things in the universe. Being wise, *i.e.*, being educated, involves an understanding that goes beyond the particular facets of any given profession. Yet understanding cannot be taught; rather, it is arrived at after much work and thought. Unbounded by the confines of set inquiry, education (achieving wisdom) is the result of constant searching and continuous critical analysis, what C. I. Lewis, in *Mind and the World Order*, calls the "reflective method" of learning.

On this analysis, my criticism of our current system is that students are discouraged from, or never given the chance for, going beyond the level of an artisan. They may have extensive factual facility and have developed, often to a high degree, a finite range of "relevant" skills but nevertheless are uneducated. Unable to perceive their skills on a broader perspective, related to other elements in the world as a whole, such students operate always in a microcosm. The microbiology student who learns quickly and accurately to distinguish streptococcal bacilli from staphylococcal bacilli is far from being educated. The well-trained history student who knows names, dates, and places of significance to historically important events but cannot see how the people whose names were learned are involved in events, causal sequences, and the process of history has little of value. The literature student who can give us a word-for-word analysis of "Ode to War" but has no feeling for the poet's deep abhorrence of war and does not question the morality of war on its basis is not educated, but only trained. And an education student who is expert at method but values skill development over development of character is trained, not educated.

Without doubt, the fundamental aspects of training — learning to differentiate bacilli, learning names and dates, analyzing poems, learning pedagogical method — are prerequisite to education, thus important and essential to the substance of education. In short, training clearly has instrumental value. The difficulty with the current system is that we seem content to stop at this training level of learning because first we fail to see education in its full

perspective and diversity, and then we fail to see training as only of instrumental value, claiming instead that it has the intrinsic value which in fact belongs to education. As a result, evidence of sufficient training is mistakenly seen as evidence of education, with the obvious consequences.

The distinction between training and education sketched here is admittedly inadequate and is deserving of more than the inchoate analysis given. Moreover, there is no absolute dichotomy between the two. Education and training are inextricably related parts of intellectual development. One does not simply become educated or have understanding; training and skill learning come first —the artisan must learn how to use the basic tools before their use may be understood and taught. Obviously, some things will require more basic skill learning than others. What must not elude us, though, is that the design and conduct of such training must be in its proper context, as the precursor to education. It must not be seen as merely training, but as a part of a far more complex, far more important process — the intellectual growth of human beings. Unfortunately, it is often difficult for students to understand the need for learning that goes beyond technical skill or is more than they perceive as needed to "get a job." Our responsibility must thus be to help the student see the need for liberal arts and develop the skills necessary to participate in them.

How, specifically, can liberal arts help overcome this training mentality? First, the liberal arts help break through the passive complacence of specialized training. The questioning spirit of the liberal arts serves as a foil to the mistaken notion of "objectivity" in training, where all the answers seem to be set and unassailable, where there frequently is only one "right" way to do things. Training promotes the myth of human perfection by not opening the possibilities of error and by not recognizing that the facts are far less clear-cut than they seem.

Second, the questioning spirit of the liberal arts helps develop intellectual dispositions and skills that are necessary for social change and the improvement of the human condition, not to mention advancement of the student's own field of knowledge. In pursuing this end, Jacob Neusner insists that we must tell our students:

> If I teach you something supposedly "relevant," I am guaranteeing irrelevance. If I teach you how to work, to have good attitudes, to take responsibility for your own ideas, to communicate and to think a problem through, no matter what subject matter I use in order to get those basic skills of mind and intellect across, then I am giving you something you can use for a very long time. Those skills will never change.[9]

No less important than these skills, however, is the learning attitude that they encourage. The liberal arts, through encouragement of a critical, analytic perspective, can help free the student's mind, in the sense described in Plato's

allegory of the cave. There Plato introduces a group of people who are chained in a cave, viewing only the shadows projected upon the wall by the ambient light of their warming fire. Until they break their bonds and look at the source and basis for the shadows, they will be forever enslaved to their mistaken view of reality. The chains of course represent ignorance, and the shadows on the wall, the easy noncritical acceptance of our world simply on the basis of its appearance to us. Training perpetuates the enslavement, though perhaps making it more sophisticated in the process. Study in the liberal arts, on the other hand, presents the opportunity to break the bonds of ignorance and begin the true education of the mind which we all claim to have as our goal.

An important dimension of this education is the insistence, within the liberal arts, that we must focus upon our understanding of concepts and the need for reflection upon those concepts. Susanne Langer reminds us of this quite nicely:

> In our present age of rapid changes, anybody can see that problems crop up at the same accelerating rate at which political and technological developments are going. What is not plain for everyone to see is that as the changes in the human scene increase, the problems they engender run into one another and ultimately run deeper, to the common roots of all our special activities, the basic attitudes and ideas embodied in [our] culture.[10]

As an example of the problem here, we only need to consider a few basic concepts. In business, for example, the concepts used in finance are "as much convenient fictions as cold facts."[11] We talk glibly about "assets," "profits," "capital," and so on, but what do these terms really mean? Business students are taught the particular definition in the book selected for their course. Yet, if we examine different texts, we find different, often radically divergent definitions. In public policy debates these days it is *de rigueur* to talk of "national security," "tax simplification," and a "healthy economy." Yet what these terms mean is as diverse as the people using them. The problem, however, is not the diversity of terms; rather, the problem is our failure to recognize and deal with that diversity. The liberal arts present an opportunity for students to analyze the world in new ways through the framework of various conceptual schemes, *e.g.*, historical, philosophical, literary, artistic, and so on. This in turn helps students develop a way of seeing the world which is *expansive*, not myopic, and encourages an inward understanding based upon the *broadening* of knowledge, not intellectual protectionism.

Third, the liberal arts encourage that analysis of values which is so important for the exercise of humanness. They serve this function by helping to show the value-ladenness of all that we do, as well as the intellectual and historical basis for doing it. Our societal and personal values are too deeply ingrained in our personalities for them not to influence everything we do. The liberal arts foster recognition of these values, the understanding that value

influence is not only right but necessary, and the willingness to assess critically those values and their role in our lives.

This assessment of values brings us, at last, to the contribution of philosophy to the liberal arts curriculum. For philosophy has two important roles in this assessment: developing the critical thinking skills needed for the assessment and leading in the assessment itself. Since critical thinking is well discussed in many places, I will discuss it only briefly and focus instead on assessment of moral values.

The term "critical thinking" is commonly used in the context of basic courses in logic and is often the title, or contained in the title, of courses best characterized as "introduction to logic." "Critical thinking" is narrower than "introduction to logic," though, because the primary focus in critical thinking courses is on application of basic reasoning skills to everyday activities. Such courses usually focus on recognition of arguments in ordinary sources (*e.g.*, newspapers, magazines, television shows, and textbooks) and development of the skills necessary to assess the logical value of those arguments. Teachers of critical thinking do not see their work as confined to a particular course, however; instead, they see the application of their course content to other areas as being perhaps of more importance.[12] The key to understanding this is the recognition that critical thinking is *applied* logic, not formal logic learned for its own sake. Since critical thinking applies to any use of reason, the course content applies to any reasoning activity. Thus, even though students may take a basic critical thinking course in the philosophy department, what they learn there must be utilized and reinforced across the curriculum. But more on this in a moment, when I turn to some specific recommendations about using the liberal arts. Before presenting those recommendations, however, I want to take a moment to examine the role of the liberal arts, especially philosophy, in the consideration of moral values. Why do we need to think about *moral* values? First, because, as Daniel McGuire has pointed out, "Moral values are more basic than all other values, because moral values touch, not just on what we do or experience or have, but on what we *are*."[13] No one can adequately function with true humanness and not understand the nature and function of moral values in life. Ethics pervades everything we do and so is relevant to all areas of study. It applies to all aspects of our lives, because ethics is at the heart of our interpersonal relationships, and we cannot function without such relationships. Again quoting McGuire, we must recognize that "life is a series of moral choices, and each and every one of us is at it all the time."[14] And while we may instinctively turn to science and technology to deal with these problems, they are of little help because, as microbiologist René Dubos has said, "Much of scientific knowledge has little relevance to the really important problems of

human life."[15] Philosophy courses, on the other hand, through a focus on ethics, bring students to grips with the moral values that influence their lives.

There is another important reason that moral values must be examined —as a counter to the nonsense being perpetrated by the so-called moral reformists. Arising from both the "values clarification" views of Sidney Simon and his followers and the "moral development" views of Lawrence Kohlberg and his followers, "moral reform" promotes a radical moral relativism of the most illogical sort. Both views hold that students should not be taught moral principles, that no one can legitimately impose his or her moral values on another person, and that moral principles are at best unjust and elitist. Although they go about it in different ways, both are nonetheless presenting an elitist position which they are making every effort to impose on everyone else. Put differently, relativism (the ethical theory behind both these views) has a deadly fault — the position is logically impossible. This fault shows up in both values clarification and moral development theory. For each argues that no general principle of moral values is legitimate, yet each presents a general principle of moral values *and* argues that the principle should be universally accepted! Both of these views are rampant in colleges of education, and thus are surfacing in precollege educational environments, as well as disciplines, that are heavily influenced by those colleges. The result is, as Christina Sommers argues, that today's college student

> shows the effects of an educational system that has kept its distance from the traditional virtues. The student arrives [in liberal arts classes] toting a ragbag . . . whose contents may be roughly itemized as follows: psychological egoism (the belief that the primary motive for action is selfishness), moral relativism (the doctrine that what is praiseworthy or contemptible is a matter of cultural conditioning), and radical tolerance (the doctrine that to be culturally and socially aware is to understand and excuse the putative wrongdoer).[16]

Liberal arts in general, and philosophy in particular, sort through the confused values in that "ragbag" and make clear the logical problems of the position described. This is done in part through the teaching of critical thinking skills, which will form the basis for recognizing the logical problems. More important, however, is that philosophy presents what Sommers describes as "straightforward courses in moral philosophy, and a sound and unabashed introduction to the Western moral tradition."[17] This is not to say that students should be indoctrinated with a set view of morality. Rather, they must be exposed to the historical ideas which constitute the basis for our present ideas and present a springboard for the crucial analysis of currently accepted values.

With 20/20 hindsight it is always easy to criticize, to point out what is wrong in the world; less easy to come by are suggestions for righting those wrongs. So that I do not give the impression of taking the easy way, I would like to sketch

three changes that I see as important if we are to overcome the training mode of contemporary higher education.

First, each one of us must reassess what we are doing in our teaching, asking, in that reassessment, how we can more effectively challenge students to develop the liberal arts perception of education as sketched in this paper. In particular, we need to focus a great deal of attention on the students coming to us from the scientific and technical disciplines, since their mind-set is most frequently antiliberal arts. Most important, we must recognize that students acquire their attitudes toward education in large measure from their teachers and develop our courses, and conduct ourselves in those courses, in ways that will promote the liberal arts approach to intellectual life.

To achieve this end we must develop new approaches to our courses so that we stop "covering the material" and instead foster an appropriate intellectual attitude toward the material covered. This will reduce the quantity of material covered in a course but will increase the quality of that coverage by improving the depth of understanding. We must also make a sustained effort to challenge the existing administrative structures, which emphasize high FTE generation at the expense of quality education (not training). Instructors must have more time with students at the personal level, ideally a maximal three-course load per term, with a class size of no more than twenty-five students. Finally, we must constantly oppose designation of the liberal arts as "service" courses and push for their inclusion in a required core curriculum that constitutes a minimum of 30 percent of *any* degree program, regardless of field.

Second, we must be willing to expand our notions of "course" and "syllabus" to allow for the integration of liberal arts across the curriculum. There must be the recognition that disciplines are artificial constructs; we must be educators of people, not teachers of disciplines. At the same time, we must articulate the discipline and show where it fits into the overall structure of knowledge and how it helps to focus the development of human intellect.

To achieve this goal we must recognize that the claim, "That is not my concern, that is for _____ to worry about" (where the blank is another discipline), is unacceptable. Every instructor should, for example, require writing as part of all course work; writing is not just for English courses! Granted, in my philosophy classes I will not emphasize the same things that would be emphasized in a writing class, because I will be concerned with the development of philosophical thought. But I must still require good writing, correct grammatical errors, and, in general, help reinforce the idea that writing well is important to being educated. Similarly, in English classes, teachers should reinforce the skills of good critical thinking and not shy away from the analysis of moral values. For example, in a basic writing course, we want students to

develop good paragraphs, sentence structure, et cetera, but the *logic* of the paragraph cannot be avoided and needs to be addressed. Also, to emphasize the importance of moral values, why not assign a brief paper discussing the moral values shown by the Reagan administration's cuts in the Medicare budget?

Once students have had basic course work that helps to develop their basic level of understanding, there will then need to be a concerted effort to build upon that understanding at upper levels. "Writing Across the Curriculum" is the general model here. For in that model the student does basic course work intensive in writing (ususally in the English department composition course), and other courses throughout the curriculum require and emphasize writing. In a similar way, students may be introduced to the liberal arts through specific course work and then have that work reinforced consistently in subsequent courses, regardless of discipline. This allows the required core curriculum to be constantly updated and expanded throughout the student's degree program, instead of being a one-shot quickie somewhere in the program, depending upon where the student can squeeze it in between the "important" courses.

Third, and last, each of us must make a commitment to work at eradication of the "training" mentality wherever it occurs. We must be willing to challenge colleagues, administraters, even members of the board, when they fail to recognize and support the value of the liberal arts in education. This is difficult, I know; none of us want to risk our jobs by making people mad, especially by pointing out their ignorance. Yet how can we, in good conscience, call ourselves educators if we are unwilling to support the liberal arts whenever needed? If we in fact believe, as we ought to, that we are doing our students a disservice by not seeing to it that they are exposed to the proper educational environment, we have no choice but to counsel with those of a different persuasion, making every effort to assist them in developing a clearer perspective of that environment.

Although perhaps in a wide-ranging way, I have been trying to argue for the importance of liberal arts, including philosophy, in the education of *every* undergraduate. I thus wholeheartedly support William Bennett's assessment that the liberal arts "are not an educational luxury, and they are not just for majors. They are a body of knowledge and a means of inquiry that convey serious truths, defensible judgments, and significant ideas."[18] Lest I be misunderstood, my argument is not intended to support a call for more liberal arts *majors*, although that would certainly be pleasant. Instead, I am agreeing with Bennett that

> whatever endeavors our students ultimately choose, some substantial quality instruction in the [liberal arts] should be an integral part of *everyone's* collegiate education. To study the [liberal arts] in no way detracts from the career interests of students. Properly taught, they will enrich us all.[19]

But there is more than just enrichment at stake here; we are engaged in the formation of intellectual attitudes that shape and direct the future of an individual. This is an incredible responsibility that we must either take seriously or get out of education and go into business. Why? Because, as Neusner points out, "if we fail [at this task, or do not take it seriously], then we foist upon the coming generations a mass of closed-minded, self-important careerists, people who impose dogma and recite facts."[20]

If we are to reach our espoused goal of educating human beings, we must always remember that the academy is not simply a shrine for the worship of ideas nor a forum for the presentation of *The Truth*. The academy, whether community college, college, or university, is not a temple where the incense of tradition must always be burned. The academy must, to use the famous Socratic metaphor, be the delivery room for the birth of ideas, a place where the intellectual power of young minds is brought to life and nurtured as our most precious commodity.[21] For a mind is, indeed, a terrible thing to waste. And waste them we will, unless we pay heed to Trevanian's warning:

> Beware the attraction of the sciences [and technology]. They are pure only in the way an ancient [person] is — bloodless, without passion. No, no. Stick to the humanistic studies where, though the truth is more difficult to establish and the proofs are more fragile, yet there is the breath of living man in them.[22]

Notes

[1] For example, see William Bennett, "To Reclaim a Legacy," reprinted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 28, 1984.

[2] Fragments 20 and 23. P. Wheelwright, ed., *The Presocratics* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1966).

[3] Why else would some scientists apply themselves to problems of medicine, while others apply themselves to problems of war? That someone chooses to develop biological warfare weapons instead of an immunization against AIDS is not a function of the neutrality of science. Similarly, "pure" science is often driven by external values, as demonstrated in the research associated with "Star Wars" technology.

[4] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, book 1, chap. 3. Emphasis added.

[5] John H. Kilwein, "Educating Health-Care Professionals: The Limits of Science," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 30, 1985, p. 32.

[6] John B. Slaughter, inauguration address at the University of Toledo, October 17, 1985.

[7] An interesting semantic problem arises here, *viz.*, this set of questions may rule out the disciplines of the liberal arts as careers (at least in the student's mind). The question "What courses do I need for a degree in English?" is OK, but its correlative, "What courses do I need to do English?" does not make sense. If we substitute engineering, accounting, business, teaching, et cetera, it seems to work. Thus, if we accept the student's idiom, the use of language may rule out much more than we think.

[8] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, book 1, chap. 1, 981b.

[9] Jacob Neusner, *How To Grade Your Professors, and Other Unexpected Advice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

[10] Susanne K. Langer, "Why Philosophy?" *Saturday Evening Post*, May 13, 1961.

[11] Sydney Harris, "Strictly Personal," *The Toledo Blade*, September 30, 1985.

[12] That is why John McPeck argues so strongly that critical thinking must be taught in content-specific courses, *e.g.*, critical thinking in English, critical thinking in biology, etc. While I disagree with the exclusivity of that teaching, I strongly agree that it is in the content areas where the real value and learning of critical thinking take place, *once the basic skills have been learned.* See John McPeck, *Critical Thinking and Education* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).

[13] Daniel C. McGuire, *The Moral Choice* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1978). Emphasis added.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] As quoted in Kilwein, p. 32.

[16] Cristina Hoff Sommers, "Ethics Without Virtue: Moral Education in America," *The American Scholar*, vol. 53 (Summer 1984), p. 386.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

[18] Bennett, p. 17.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 18. Emphasis added.

[20] Neusner, p. 38.

[21] A paraphrastic interpretation of a Norman Cousins poem about libraries.

[22] Trevanian, *The Summer of Katya* (New York: Crown, 1983).

SPECIAL SECTION

The Humanities and the World of Work

The following two essays were conceived as companion pieces. The first examines the theoretical bearing of the place of work in Western thought, and the second, with a view toward meshing this tradition with the needs of contemporary students, discusses the development of a course in working class literature.

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WORK AND LIBERAL LEARNING
George T. Karnezis

I BELIEVE KENNETH Burke once suggested that becoming a student of the humanities was like arriving at a party already in progress. The conversation was stimulating, perhaps even provocative, and your task was to attend to it carefully before joining in. Once part of the conversation, you were taken up by it, as much shaped by as shaping its direction, questions, and themes. Some of this metaphor still suggests itself when we speak of "falling into" a conversation that may have preceded our arrival.

Burke's imagery strikes me as faithful to the kind of experience the study of humanistic texts is. It pictures "the great conversation" and helps me appreciate what is meant by traditions of thought as establishing subjects to be "conversant" in. I suspect this notion of liberal learning (as an *activity* of intelligent talk about things that matter) appeals to us all. We know such talk has been going on for some time and depends on us to be interested and interesting guests for its continuation. Indeed, as H. George Hahn has suggested in a recent "Point of View" column in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the conversation risks becoming muted by teachers' growing habit of replacing primary texts with textbooks.[1] We view this practice as a muffling of the voices of the past, a streamlining of their thoughts in the same way some journalists telescope nuances and erase tone and color from lived experience.

In any case, if we follow the metaphor a bit further, it lets us see liberal learning as an acquired fluency gained through increased exposure to themes and questions that still address us. ("Exposure," a word that's always tempting us, has always seemed to me too passive a notion. Let's call it instead "increased social dialogue with themes and questions still vital.") We want to invite our students to join the conversation, to establish themselves as contributors to it. We don't wish them to see past traditions of thought as the possession of an effete class of mandarin teachers whose conversation does not address them or provide them with entrance points. Sharing many Americans' suspicion of the past and a lust for the new, pressed by careerism into an exclusive appetite for technical (*i.e.*, conveniently marketable) skills, our students are all too ready to leave the party or, at best, be polite but indifferent listeners to talk that seems arcane. Even the traditional apologies for liberal learning seem to exclude their immediate concerns. How often have they heard humanists proclaim, "There's more to life than work," or "We do not live by bread alone."

Such catch phrases — we sometimes utter them even to our own embarrassment — encourage students to conclude that the humanities are for recreation periods and, given their busy schedules, they might legitimately wonder why they must pay for a dimension of their curriculum that offers courses in how to spend their leisure. Even our own defense of what we do sometimes risks trivializing it. Thus, to set the humanities against technology, to see concerns of the liberal arts as antithetical to concerns of the worker, to establish education as preferable or more comprehensive than training, is to create walls rather than build bridges. Such crude dialectics risk ghettoizing the humanities, leaving us all to converse about "the best that has been thought and said" without an eye toward how those ideas and that conversation might connect with our students' working lives, helping to sharpen their sense of who they are (or will be) as workers in the human community. Such sharpened critical reflection resists handing over discussion about work exclusively to job counselors and teachers in career programs. It would involve students becoming party to the tradition of conversation that is less immediately concerned with how to do a job than with how work, as a condition of human living, has been conceived.

In what follows I want to suggest or, perhaps, remind ourselves of how the subjects of work and leisure (and some allied concepts) acquire meaning from the conversation that liberal learning is.

Work

NOW IT MAY or may not be news to our students that religious tradition places work in a sacred context. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, humankind's fall from grace issues into a punishment that establishes work as a curse, the very sign of

human reprobation. Here work is mere toil, one mark of our relationship to the divine order. As a result, we might wonder what sense it makes to speak of work as anything but travail, a dire necessity, punishment.

But the Old Testament story allows a subtler reading. We are told that the first couple was, before the Fall, charged with tending the Garden, with "dressing and keeping" it. Hearing this, Milton imagines the first couple relaxing "Under a tuft of shade" where "they sat them down . . . after not more toil / Of their sweet gardening labor than sufficed / To recommend" a cool wind and whet their thirst and appetite. Even Paradise, it seems, involved effort of a kind, and so the possibility of work as something other than travail is admitted.[2] A similar double vision is voiced by Hesiod in "Works and Days," where we discover two kinds of strife, one positive, inducing healthy competition, the other a punishment loosed from Pandora's box. Hesiod even uses two terms to designate the two possible aspects of work: *ergon*, meaning work, is distinguished from *ponos* or the painful activity that the bad goddess of strife instituted as burdensome labor.[3]

Listening to these positive and negative notes requires us to think of work in the context of divine or at least moral and ethical values. That our work lives are thinkable in these terms suggests how much a word or concept we take for granted has history clinging to it. Consequently, we might ask our students whether it makes any sense these days to speak, as did Luther (under the influence of this tradition), of the work one chooses as a "vocation," a calling from God to work out one's salvation by making a virtue of necessity. If work is not exclusively a result of the Fall — indeed, if work was present even in Paradise — then it is possible to see some sorts of work as even blessed, done not as contrition but undertaken as a different kind of sacrament. We could take the idea further into a Calvinistic context where success, accumulation of wealth, and the social advancement gained through hard work become the visible signs of one's divinely chosen status. Now the curse in the Garden is transformed, at least for some, into a blessed opportunity for earthly as well as heavenly salvation. Recall, for instance, how Christ's parable of the talents criticizes those who do not capitalize on their endowments but, like the cursed fig tree, bear no fruit.

This necessarily synoptic view of work as an idea that lives in what we hear in Western religious tradition only hints at leads we might encourage our students to follow. One such lead is suggested by the word "vocation," a term that, it seems to me, has been pretty much bleached of its sacred coloring. Many of our students know it only as a narrowly secular term that, when used as a modifier, designates a career-oriented education. But listening to its religious overtones suggests, as I noted, a positive view of work as a hearkening to the

divine will and transforms the life of the worker into almost a pilgrimage that makes work a spiritual as well as secular exercise.

Burton J. Bledstein, in his *The Culture of Professionalism*, demonstrates how static this notion of a "calling" was before the competing notion of a "career" assumed prominence in nineteenth-century America. A "calling" established the worker in one role and did not encourage change; in effect, it tended to justify or rationalize staying in one's place and succeeding in that role to serve the community. By contrast, the notion of career, with its association of "a course" or "race," suggested that the individual could change work and vertically progress. Less important now was fulfilling one's "vocation" than making a career for oneself. For Bledstein, thinking of your professional life in terms of ascending stages was a mid-nineteenth-century innovation, one that had been held at bay by a less individualistic work ethic that eschewed upward mobility in favor of fulfilling one's vocation in the community. He illustrates the point by citing Franklin's *Autobiography*, which, less concerned with dramatizing his advancement in various roles as statesman and scientist, concluded by recounting "the many and random community improvement projects in which he participated."[4] For Bledstein, this new and more secular notion of a "career" displaces the traditional idea of a "vocation." Under its influence, work tends to be conceived less as a means of fulfilling one's assigned role for the good of all than as a matter of freely choosing or making that role in the course of one's individual advancement within a career.[5]

The religious tradition's impact on thinking about work is also evident when we note how it has been invoked in curiously interesting ways either to rationalize or to challenge conditions of workers. Thus whole peoples could be enslaved as cursed to mere toil while others pursued their salvation in almost paradisial contentment. Or, as the late Herbert Gutman has noted, the labor movement in the nineteenth century could exploit Biblical tradition to marshall its forces. It blithely used Biblical imagery, as did a local UMW official who said: "The first labor organization mentioned in history, either profane or divine, was the one founded just outside of the historic Garden of Eden, by God himself; the charter members being Adam and Eve."[6]

Similarly, Christ's expulsion of the moneychangers marks a critical moment in the labor movement, indicating as it does for this same official that "the beginning of the ministry of the 'Nazarene' opposed all forms of oppression of the poor and [was] antagonistic to the operation of 'Wall Street' in the house of His Father, the sanctuary of worship."[7] Such criticism finds in Biblical tradition, then, a language whose moral force can define the circumstances of workers, situating them (if only rhetorically) in a sacred historical context —making their actions seem less isolated moments in history than meaningful repetitions of earlier struggles.

Work and Leisure

A MORE SECULARIZED or politicized treatment of work comes to us from Aristotle, who initiated conversation about kinds of work and the connection between work and leisure. Hannah Arendt notices how Aristotle's division of work was essentially a social and political statement. Thus a free citizen could be such only insofar as he was freed from work devoted to the narrow fulfillment of his biological needs. Such work was *servile* as opposed to *liberal*, and prevented one from the profitable use of leisure. (In the Greek, "leisure" is *schole*, from which the word "school" is derived; it carries a normative meaning of the wise use of leisure.) Leisure was necessary, in this view, for developing virtue and the performance of political duties. Free citizens certainly could not lead the life of mechanics or tradesmen. The classical distinction, then, between the liberal and the servile arts suggests a separation between the values and experience peculiar to a life of leisure and those more severely limited by the servile arts of biological survival or self-maintenance.

I suspect this constellation of ideas might stimulate dicussion of how much community (or any other) colleges have bought into this Aristotelian division of work and leisure — based as it is on an oligarchical society. To what extent might a curriculum focused on acquisition of skills (an emphasis on what the Greeks called *techne*) eclipse the nurturing of prudence and *phronesis* — the so-called aristocratic virtues that demand their own time for development and exercise? The social critic Theodore Adorno saw in Aristotle's habit of categorizing and dividing an anticipation of "the division of men into functions independent of each other," so much so "that it occurs to none of these functions to cross over to the others and remind each other of man." Adorno laments the impoverishment of modern work experience and says that "only a cunning intertwining of pleasure and work" can rescue it. But for him such an intertwining is becoming "less and less tolerated," with unfortunate results: "Even the so-called intellectual professions are being deprived, through their growing resemblance to business, of all joy." For Adorno, the spheres of work and leisure are regrettably so disjoined that "no fulfillment may be attached to work, which would otherwise lose its functional modesty in the totality of purposes, no spark of reflection is allowed to fall into leisure time, since it might otherwise leap across to the work-a-day world and set it on fire."[8]

Adorno's skepticism (some might call it cynicism) is a possible response to the modern experience of work. While Aristotle foresaw humankind developing a technology whereby "every instrument could accomplish its own work" and leave freedom for a widespread creative use of leisure, Adorno seems sensitive to the unseemly effects of division of labor noted by Adam Smith. For Smith, once work was divided into smaller tasks, people were, in effect, underemployed; having scarce occasion to "exert understanding or . . . exercise

invention," they risk growing "as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become." Smith foresaw a mental torpor that would render the worker "not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life."[9] Such remarks explode Aristotle's hope that leisure time would expand with advances in technology. Indeed, social philosophers like Adorno and Arendt go so far as to view modern leisure as radically impoverished when measured against the Greek ideal. Arendt in particular challenges Marx's prophecy that workers' movements would emancipate them from servile work, freeing them for so-called higher activities. For Arendt, modern leisure is as much bound by habits of consumption and requirements of life maintenance as work (what she calls labor):

> The spare time of the *animal laborans* is never spent in anything but consumption, and the more time left to him, the greedier and more craving his appetites. That these appetites become more sophisticated, so that consumption is no longer restricted to the necessities but, on the contrary, mainly concentrates on the superfluities of life, does not change the character of this society, but harbors the grave danger that eventually no object of the world will be safe from consumption and annihilation through consumption.[10]

In Arendt's view, modern leisure is vulnerable to the infectious aspects of impoverished or servile work. If we accept her notion that modern leisure is merely a continuation of Wordsworth's "getting and spending," that it is less freedom from servile work than a continuation of it in other forms, then we might encourage our students to wonder about the quality of their leisure time. Indeed we might ask whether Aristotle's valuation of leisure, with its political dimension, severely restricts civic participation in a democracy to a leisured class lucky enough to have escaped the corrupting influence of modern working.

I have no answers to such questions, but I would insist that our cultural tradition is alive with potential conversation-inducing material that can engage us and our students. In that engagement, we might relinquish the notion that our teaching status somehow excludes us from being viewed as workers. Some of us might candidly submit the garden of academe to a close scrutiny and, yes, speak to Adorno's provocative remark about how "even the so-called intellectual professions are being deprived, through their growing resemblance to business, of all joy."

Adorno's remark in particular makes me recall that several years ago I listened to a department chair tactfully suggest that an especially sociable colleague was perhaps consuming an excess of my time. The chair's way of putting it was circumspect. He mentioned that another colleague, concerned for me as a "new kid on the block," did not wish me to be victimized by "time

wasters." Reflecting now as I did then on his remarks, I realize how such subtle "criticism" was, in fact, a challenge to a whole style of academic being-together that (at least in my previous experience) never had to defend itself. That such conversation was viewed as beside the point struck me then, as it does now, as wrong-headed.

Another example of the less than joyful condition of our work is the modern academic obsession with the infamous FTE, a worry that suggests the encroachment of an industrial model into the kind of work I do — "businessification" of the educational enterprise that strikes me as odd. Nonetheless, I see nothing wrong with opening up a candid discussion of myself as working under conditions that may or may not be suitable to the nature of the task. The humanities teacher, seen now as a worker in the fields of academe, can seem less isolated from his or her community of worker-students than when denying shared status with them. The goal here is to share with students the idea that work has its conditions, which reflection, prompted by texts, might define.

Conclusion

I BEGAN WITH what seemed to me an edifying metaphor that suggested how liberal learning involved active participation in conversation at a party. It is time now to step beyond this metaphor, lest I leave the impression of the humanities as a gathering of the effete for good talk without consequence. Familiar enough is the Marxist axiom urging us not just to understand the world but change it. Perhaps that axiom needs repeating so our conversation does not lack consequences beyond its own circumstances. If our conversation with our students, aided by our sense of a continually speaking past — and a sharpened perception of what it means to be alive as a worker in the present — if, I say, that conversation illuminates their present and themselves, then the twin Socratic emphases on self-knowledge and the examined life will have been honored.

Notes

[1] H. George Hahn, "As Textbooks Replace Treatises, An Academic Gresham's Law Is at Work," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 30, 1985, p. 84.

[2] Note also how Milton has Adam, before the Fall, distinguish humankind from animals who are "idle and unemploy'd." "Man," says Adam, "hath his daily work of body and mind / Appointed, which declares his Dignity, / And the regard of heaven on all his ways." *Paradise Lost*, bk. 4, ll. 618-20. After delivering these observations on the religious tradition, I happened across Jaroslav Pelikan's similar analysis, "Command or Curse? The Paradox of Work in the Judeo-Christian Tradition," in *Comparative Work Ethics, Occasional Papers of the Council of Scholars*, no. 4 (Washington: Library of Congress, 1985), pp. 9-23.

[3] Hesiod, "Works and Days," *The Poems of Hesiod*, trans. R. M. Frazer (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), pp. 94-97.

[4] Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism* (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 175.

[5] For further discussion, see Robert N. Bellah *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 65-71.

[6] Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 88.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[8] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso Editions, 1984), p. 130.

[9] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: Modern Library, 1937), p. 734.

[10] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 133.

MEMORY AS METHOD: LITERATURE AND WRITING ABOUT WORK

Janet Zandy

STUDENTS WRITE SIMPLISTICALLY not because they are simple, but because they are severed. They are cut off from their own history — immigrant history, labor history, women's history, social history. They are floating in an ahistorical or narrowly controlled historical space, bound by worn and shallow clichés about the path to prosperity and success. It does not occur to them that history and literature are their inheritance, to be spent and used. History and literature are subjects to be "taken" as quickly and painlessly as possible. They need not linger there. They need only to chase after the job in the technologies that they believe will offer them the kinds of satisfactions — material and physical — they do not have now. I think they are on a treadmill of false promises and progress.

Many of my students — typical of those in community colleges — work thirty-five or more hours a week, usually at dead-end, low-paying jobs in supermarkets or fast-food restaurants. Round and round, they seem always to be in motion. I wonder if there is any purposeful forward movement. Their journals echo their concerns in prose constricted by babble. Is it not understandable that when we face these students in writing class and coax them to let their minds simmer and percolate, we are met by blank stares? We spend so much time on the printed work, the composition, the verbal exchange, that listening, respectful listening, can easily be neglected. I think that in approaching the teaching of the humanities we need to concern ourselves with the content

and context of student voices. If I am hearing their voices correctly, I must find a context in my own classroom that will break up this dead-end pattern and offer them a sense of connection and the possibility of community.

For this reason, I have chosen to focus on the worker — poorly paid, unpaid, rural, urban, ethnically diverse, multiracial, male and female, adult and child. To develop a sense of "worker consciousness," I devised a course in working-class literature about four years ago. Its impetus was personal. It came out of a recognition of the dichotomy between the content of the textbooks (particularly literary anthologies) and the content of the lives of my students. Missing, or inadequately covered, in traditional literary anthologies were reflections of the lives of "ordinary" men and women. Although the traditional anthology might be subtitled, "The Human Experience," I felt that too often "human" was too narrowly defined. (Mentioning this brings up the question of the canon, which is beyond the scope of this paper. However, I do recommend a collection of essays, *Reconstructing American Literature*,[1] which addresses this issue in a useful and intelligent way.)

Teaching working-class literature involves struggling with definitions of class, work, and literature. I would argue that the approach to this course should not be a matter of selecting working-class elements in texts written from a middle- or upper-class perspective. The angle of vision is from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. I very deliberately choose material written by working people themselves, or written by their better educated sons and daughters who got out but are looking back and reporting the past.

I mentioned the course recently to an English professor visiting from another college, and he responded, "Well, there isn't any working-class literature; workers were too busy working to write." This is not a surprising response. What is surprising is how much material about working people does exist, once you start looking for it. Working-class literature is historically dense, rooted in economic, social, and political reality, not in the academy. It springs from traditional and folk forms. It is grounded in narration — the human urge to tell a story. Working-class literature does not fit into neat literary categories or precise boundaries of genre. Besides novels, stories, poems, and plays, it includes diaries, journals, oral histories, songs, tall tales, "lies," documentaries, and reportage. One of the benefits of looking at literature through the lens of the worker is that it reduces a tendency toward course ghettoization. By that I mean the mistake that students make (and perhaps their advisers, too) that a specific course, e.g., black literature or women's literature, is only for a specific constituency.

I limit my course reading to the American working class, because there is so much material and because the issue of class is particular to each country. I do not call it labor literature because I think that label is too exclusive — it does not

include the unpaid work of women or those workers, often ethnic and racial minorities, who were denied entry into certain unions.

I am interested in stories that trace an American sense of what W. E. B. DuBois called "twoness," a double-consciousness affecting those hyphenated Americans struggling to fit into the American mold and acquire the American Dream and to retain their own identities. Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* is an example of this "twoness." In looking at the immigrant experience, I select works that are cross-generational, e.g., Thomas Bell's *Out of This Furnace*. Also, the writings of Anzia Yezierska and Richard Rodriguez are useful in studying the conflict between individual success and ethnic and familial loyalty.

I do not see working-class literature in strictly white, urban, male terms —the old stereotype of two guys drinking beer at the corner tavern. I include the voices of minorities — black, native American, Hispanic, as well as the oral histories and stories of rural working Americans, as illustrated in Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds*. I look at those workers who are DPs — displaced persons — native-born Americans who have been relocated and uprooted, whose spirits are too big to fit into the tiny spaces allotted to them. This theme is beautifully and painfully depicted in Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker*. Finally, I select works which show how the gains workers have made have come through collective struggle. I use Michael Wilson's screenplay, *Salt of the Earth*, and the film *Salt of the Earth*, made in the fifties by blacklisted artists, to underscore this theme.

This literature is protean. The task for the instructor is to find ways to illustrate this dynamic quality. My approach is interdisciplinary. I draw on readings in history, sociology, anthropology, and labor studies. I like to give students a sense of dialogue between and among disciplines and texts. Also, the text is supplemented by films, slides, recordings, and many pictures and photographs. I'm partial to the work of Lewis Hine and compare what I do with Hine's use of photo-montage, that is, a process of layering and juxtaposing subjects rather than separating them. For example, I might use Kathy Kahn's *Hillbilly Women* with excerpts from Guy and Candie Carawan's *Voices from the Mountains* and Arnow's *The Dollmaker*, followed by Judy Grahn's "The Common Woman Poems." I might include a film, e.g., "Songs and Stories of Labor," with excerpts from Fowke and Glazer's *Songs of Work and Protest*.

As for the organization of the course, I reject the chronological approach because it relies too much on labor history and hence leaves too much out. Also, this approach might give students a false sense of easy progress. I would rather they see a dynamic, circular pattern, one of remembering rather than ascending. I also reject genre as an organizational tool, since, as mentioned before, so much of this literature tests the traditional boundaries of genre.

I organize the material around the interplay of three narrative voices: "I," "they," and "we."[2] I begin with "I," *homo narrans*, the individual storyteller in oral histories or in autobiographical writing. Studs Terkel's *Working* and Ann Banks's *First Person America* are useful for this purpose. From the first-person voices of working people, I turn to the accounts of their lives by their better-educated sons and daughters, who in fiction — stories and novels — bear witness to the real experiences of their parents and ancestors. Writers like Maxine Hong Kingston and Thomas Bell, who in their stories of Chinese laborers who built the railroad or Slovakian peasants who became Americans by forging steel are looking back and giving testimony. Sometimes the story is an effort to reconcile the tension between the "I" that leaves and the "they" who stay. Richard Rodriguez, Zora Neal Hurston, and Leslie M. Silko are writers who explore this tension, who struggle to find a "we," a sense of community and reconcilation with the past.[3]

Finally, working-class literature begins with two issues not usually raised in a humanities class: work and class. I ask students to try to distinguish between mindless labor and good work, what some call the "sacred fire." I haven't found a student yet who wasn't interested in meaningful work. I want them to see the world of work as part of a larger struggle for human development and dignity.

More difficult than work, however, is the concept of class. By the end of the semester students agree that class is a complicated issue, one that cannot be decided just by measuring wealth. I resist the temptation to define class solely in terms of control and ownership of the means of production, although, certainly, that is a crucial component. Students are conscious of living along certain class lines but find it difficult to put a name to them. On the first day of class, I give them a student-information handout that includes a question on class identification. I offer them a range — poor, working, middle, upper — and ask them to circle the level that describes them. It is a question that piques their interest and stimulates a semester-long chase after an adequate definition of "working class." I want students to see class as something dynamic, based on relationships. I want them to see how class and work intersect and form a continuum that includes issues of worker safety, physical and psychological oppression, and racial and gender discrimination. I want my students to leave this course with more questions than answers and with a more acute consciousness of themselves as worker-students who can question and test their own curriculum.

As every teacher knows, one way of testing students' perceptions is through the assignment of papers. The assignment I have used in working-class literature is to develop a profile of an American worker. We begin with a general discussion of good work, the perfect job, and so forth. They read two excerpts from Studs Terkel's *Working*, one about a steelworker who does "strictly

muscle work . . . pick it up, put it down," and the other about a stonemason who builds houses out of stone, who dreams about stone: "All my dreams, it seems like it's got to have a piece of rock mixed in it."

The next step is to have each student interview a worker. I remind the class that we define work very loosely — including the unpaid work of those who, for example, care for children or the elderly. They have to develop a query sheet, a list of questions for their interviewee, and they have to convert the question-answer format into a profile of a worker. Students find this part of the project understandable, with clear goals. The more complicated task is for them to see how what they hear from a single individual can be linked to what others have researched and studied. I push them to make connections between what they find in the library (on single mothers, on welders, on state troopers) and the person whose working life they are trying to understand. I know I am forcing them to think horizontally, to make mental connections in a way they are not used to. I tell them it is new, not impossible. I insist on seeing their drafts and work in progress. This step gives me the chance to teach the new MLA guidelines on documentation and other research techniques.

The third part of the project includes a one-page evaluation, a synthesis of the research and the interview, in which students write their own assessment of the jobs they have learned about. They are encouraged to pose some of the questions they used in their interviews to themselves, *e.g.*, "Knowing what you do about this kind of job, would you choose it?" If time allows, students give brief oral reports about their worker profiles, explaining what they have learned about each work situation. Finally, students are encouraged to be careful editors and proofreaders because they know I plan to take the worker profiles from their reports and compile a class book, *Profiles of American Workers*. Everyone in the class gets a copy.

Of course, there is more to say about the details of this assignment and the nature of the working-class literature course. Also, it is always difficult to be objective about one's own method. So, I will conclude by quoting the comments of two students on the course: "Working-class literature is about people working and struggling in an unfair world and still finding a way to put their mark on the world . . . seeing everyday things in life as special and different." The second student's response was: "I was able to relate to this literature. It shows a variety of people, all struggling, always working, never having enough time. These are feelings that I felt many times. We were always taught to believe that these feelings were weaknesses, or 'all in our heads.' To have these feelings put in writing for everyone to read makes me feel stronger."

Notes

[1] Paul Lauter, ed., *Reconstructing American Literature* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1983).

[2] The inspiration for this ordering of narrative voices is Barbara Myerhoff's *Number Our Days* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

[3] Using this scheme, the readings mentioned in this article can be grouped as follows:

Group 1: "I"
Terkel, *Working*
Banks, *First Person America*
Gwaltney, *Drylongso*
Katzman and Tuttle, *Plain Folk*
Seller, *Immigrant Women*
Kahn, *Hillbilly Women*
Eisler, *The Lowell Offering*
Hoffman and Howe, *Women Working*

Group 2: "They"
Arnow, *The Dollmaker*
Olsen, *Tell Me a Riddle*
Bell, *Out of This Furnace*
Fowke and Glazer, *Songs of Work and Protest*
Hong Kingston, *China Men*
Smedley, *Daughter of Earth*
Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory*
Kelley, *Weeds*
Films: *Rosie the Riveter*
Songs and Stories of Labor

Group 3: "We"
Silko, *Ceremony*
Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Wilson, *Salt of the Earth*
Grahn, "The Common Woman Poems"
Film: *Salt of the Earth*

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ESSAY REVIEWS

A Call for Renewal in America

Elnora Rigik

Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life, by Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. xiii + 355 pp. $16.95.

SINCE ALEXIS de Tocqueville wrote his classic analysis of the American character in *Democracy in America* 150 years ago, we have struggled to express what it is about our private and public lives that makes us Americans, to identify those common characteristics that Tocqueville called "habits of the heart." Tocqueville, the most profound, astute, and complex observer of a nation espousing the ideals of equality and freedom, serves as the starting point for the recently published *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Like Tocqueville, the authors of *Habits of the Heart* concentrate on "how to preserve or create a morally coherent life." (p. vii.) Their book opens with a series of questions: "How ought we to live? How do we think about how to live? Who are we as Americans? What is our character?" (p. vii.) In this penetrating and illuminating book, the authors look in depth at individualism in contemporary American society. At the outset they clarify their purpose:

> The central problem of our book concerns the American individualism that Tocqueville described with a mixture of admiration and anxiety. It seems to us that it is individualism, and not equality, as Tocqueville thought, that has marched inexorably through our history. We are concerned that this individualism may have grown cancerous. . . . We want to know what individualism in America looks and feels like, and how the world appears in its light. [p. viii.]

Habits of the Heart is not, however, another intellectual history of individualism in America, nor is it a theoretical statement of how its effects might

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be remedied. Rather, by combining fieldwork and extensive interviews with historical reflection and moral argument, sociologist Robert N. Bellah and his four coauthors set out to discover how ordinary Americans make moral sense of their lives and to find those "habits of the heart" that include consciousness, culture, and daily practices of life. Between 1979 and 1984 the authors interviewed over 200 middle-class Americans to find out how they think about themselves and their society and how their actions relate to those ideas. The limitation to the middle class was conscious since the team wished to focus on norm-setters. Ours is a middle-class culture in which most Americans, regardless of income, think in middle-class terms of striving and personal fulfillment. To explore the nature of both private and public life, the team undertook four research projects. In thinking about private life, they selected love and marriage and therapy. In thinking about public life, they looked at local politics, voluntary associations, and newer forms of political activism that have grown out of the sixties.

Each of the authors carried out a project with a different focus and locale. Ann Swidler, who teaches sociology at Stanford University, examined "how the private realm of love and marriage gives shape to peoples' lives" in and around San Jose, California, in the midst of Silicon Valley. Steven M. Tipton, a sociologist at Emory University, explored therapy as a way of seeing life in the San Francisco area and in a major Southern city. Richard Madsen, a sociologist at the University of California, San Diego, became involved in public life in suburban neighborhoods near Boston and San Diego. William M. Sullivan, a philosopher who teaches at LaSalle College, studied the work of the Institute for the Study of Civic Values, which does community organizing in Philadelphia, and the Campaign for Economic Democracy in Santa Monica, California. Bellah, Ford Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, organized the studies and prepared the final manuscript.

From this comprehensive study of private and public life, the authors conclude that Americans no longer have satisfactory ways of relating private and public life. The individual, once a part of a larger community, has now become the sole arbiter of an isolated morality:

> This is a society in which the individual can only rarely and with difficulty understand himself and his activities as interrelated in morally meaningful ways with those of other, different Americans. Instead of directing cultural and individual energies toward relating the self to its larger context, [today's society] urges a strenuous effort to make of our particular segment of life a small world of its own. [p. 50.]

The result in American life is what the authors call a "lifestyle enclave" as opposed to "community." A community is a group of socially interdependent people who share in decisions and who share rituals that bind them into a

"community of memory." (p. 333.) In sharp contrast is the "lifestyle enclave," a group that shares "patterns of appearance, consumption, and leisure activities," but a group that is not interdependent, that does not act together politically, and that shares no history. (p. 335.) Most Americans, the authors feel, have opted for such barren "lifestyle enclaves" and have lost a vital sense of community.

America, of course, does have a tradition that combines both individualism and public life. Bellah himself in an interview states, "There has to be a recognition that there are resources in our past that if rethought, reworked, and imaginatively re-created could help put things back together."[1] These historic resources are fourfold; the Puritans' Biblical sense of corporate interdependence, exemplified especially in John Winthrop; the civic virtue of Jeffersonian republicanism; the utilitarian individualism of Benjamin Franklin; and the expressive individualism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman.

Yet, most Americans seem to have lost touch with these traditions or, more important, suffer from cultural aphasia, a lack of awareness of those past ways of thinking that have brought us where we are. Because of this cultural aphasia and because of a lack of cultural conversation, many people have lost the language needed to make moral sense of their lives. We need a language of connection. We cannot satisfactorily articulate the reasons for our deepest commitments, not even to our marriages or our children, let alone to personal aspirations. While most Americans are at no loss for words, they are unable to express the richness of their lives (a richness thereby diminished). Thus, goals and values become no more than arbitrary preferences.

Woven into *Habits of the Heart* are the stories of several of the individuals interviewed. Their stories illustrate, over and over, the need for a language of connection. For example, Brian Palmer, a competitive and successful businessman, is divorced by his neglected wife. Suddenly left with the responsibility for three children, he refocuses his energy on his own family and eventually on that of a second wife with four children. Family life is a source of greater satisfaction than business ever was. Yet, he has only the barest explanation for the new commitments that define his life: "I just find that I get more personal satisfaction from choosing course B over course A. It makes me feel better about myself." (p. 98.) Margaret Oldham is similarly tongue-tied. A therapist, she has a highly successful academic record and works hard at her profession and her marriage to a successful engineer. Margaret has a vision of individual self-fulfillment that involves self-knowledge, a tolerance of differences among people, and an acceptance of responsibility for one's own life. Yet she has no way to connect her own fulfillment to that of other people. She says, "I just sort of accept the way the world is and then don't think about it a whole lot. I tend to operate on the assumption that what I want to do and what I feel like is what I should do." (p. 14.)

One of the most painful examples of cultural aphasia is Sheila Larson. A nurse, Sheila describes her religion as "Sheilaism": "I believe in God, I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice." (p. 221.) Justin Dart, a multimillionaire businessman, comments: "I have never looked for a business that's going to render a service to mankind. I figure that if it employs a lot of people and makes a lot of money, it is in fact rendering a service to mankind." Dart is indifferent to what he calls "these crappy issues like equal rights." (p. 264.)

Not all Americans, though, have lost a vision of community involvement, and the authors of *Habits of the Heart* firmly remind us of that. There are still those Americans whose own visions transcend the "Sheilaisms" and the "crappy issues" outlook of the day. There are still those Americans, Bellah and his team certainly among them, who value — and would have others value —Madisonian pluralism as expressed in Federalist Paper no. 45: "The public good, the real welfare of the great body of the people, is the supreme object to be pursued." (p. 253.) One such person is Mary Taylor, an environmental activist in California, who genuinely cares for her own community and who works for the betterment of those within it. She is a civic-minded professional whose commitment to the common good helps shape the integrity of a community. Mary says, "To try to find out the public good, I would try to ask questions about how this or that would affect the community twenty-five years from now." (p. 193.) Likewise, for nearly a decade, Ed Schwartz has been a leader at the Institute for the Study of Civic Values in Philadelphia, working toward citizen education with his colleague and wife Jane Shull. Taylor, Schwartz, and Shull exemplify individuals joined in interdependence. Because they share a common tradition, certain habits of the heart, they work together to construct a common good.

At its highest level, *Habits of the Heart* is a call for renewal. It is a moving argument for personal and social transformation for public good, a call for binding individuals together into a common life and into a "community of memory and hope." The authors point out the paradox of the phrase "private citizen," reminding us that in the very phrase itself the meaning of citizenship escapes us. Instead, they plead for a new "social ecology," a renewal of the moral understandings and commitment that tie people together in community. Specifically, they plead for changes in work and in education that could help fashion a society of individuality *and* commitment.

Bellah has commented, "What we need to do is reappropriate the old notion of vocation as a calling. A career should not be just something in which you reach for ever higher stages of glory and fame but something that allows us to contribute to the good of all."[2] By reducing the extrinsic rewards and punishments associated with work and by reducing the inordinate rewards of

ambition and the inordinate fears of being losers that govern our society, Bellah and his coauthors feel work could be redefined to provide a contribution to the good of all. Work should not be merely a means to individual wealth and advancement.

Also, *Habits of the Heart* suggests educational reform as a way of combating the results of excessive isolation that Tocqueville feared: "Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart."[3] Bellah's team asserts that our lives can have sense "because of traditions that are centuries, if not millennia, old. It is these traditions that help us know that it does make a difference who we are and how we treat one another." (p. 282.) In a day when colleges and universities are under pressure to provide technical and career education, the educational system often cannot help provide either personal meaning or civic culture. And so *Habits of the Heart* calls for a return to the classic role of education "as a way to articulate private aspirations with common cultural meanings so that individuals simultaneously can become more fully developed people and citizens of a free society." (p. 293.) Education should provide us with some of the help we need to make tradition a vital resource in our lives. Helen Vendler suggests that a study of the classic stories and myths of our heritage will save us from going through life unaware "that others have also gone through it, and have left a record of their experience."[4] We need to think about Job, Jesus, the Prodigal Son, Antigone, and Lear to see what it means to be a good person in relationship to others in particular situations; and we need to share this awareness with our students. Such stories and myths powerfully shape the habits of our hearts by guiding us through examples.

Finally, *Habits of the Heart* is a remarkable collaboration, the product of more than five years of dialogue among its authors. Unusual for such a collaborative effort, the book has a unity of tone and argument. It is beautifully written, refreshingly free of jargon. The authors manage to criticize the ideas of their interviewees without condescending either to the ideas or the people; this critical respect is itself a moving gesture of community. The collaboration of the authors of *Habits of the Heart* evidences the sort of commitment they call for in America. Becoming a group that shared a common culture, memory, and hope, they discovered "that a strong group that respects individual differences will strengthen autonomy as well as solidarity." (p. 307.)

Bellah and his coauthors plead that "a free society needs constantly to consider and discuss its present reality in the light of its past traditions and where it wants to go." (p. 307.) *Habits of the Heart* most eloquently can lead our present society in that self-consideration. It is a book we all need to read, to consider, and to make part of the habits of our own hearts.

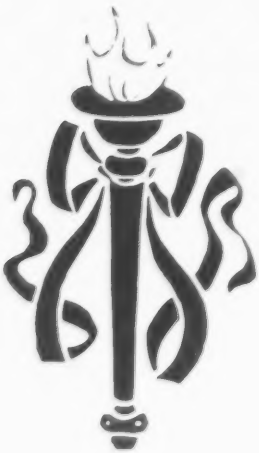
Notes

[1] Alvin P. Sanoff, "A Conversation with Robert Bellah: 'Individualism Has Been Allowed to Run Rampant,' " *Newsweek*, May 25, 1985, pp. 69-70.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed., J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1969), p. 508.

[4] Helen Vendler, "Presidential Address 1980," *PMLA*, vol. 96 (1981), p. 349.



Critical Thinking, Liberal Thinking, and Writing

Robert R. Lawrence

Teaching and Assessing Writing: Recent Advances in Understanding, Evaluating and Improving Student Performance, by Edward M. White. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985. xxiv + 304 pp. $19.95.

A New Case for the Liberal Arts: Assessing Institutional Goals and Student Development, by David G. Winter, David C. McClelland, and Abigail J. Stewart. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981. 247 pp. $18.95.

THE CONTEMPORARY argument for critical thinking is positively supported by authors Edward M. White and David G. Winter and his coauthors. Both *Teaching and Assessing Writing* and *A New Case for the Liberal Arts* present empirical studies clearly demonstrating that writing and critical thinking are integrally related. The ability to clearly explain ideas encountered in different sources, according to both books, is the purpose of education in the humanities and the liberal arts. White writes as a professor of English attempting to show that writing can be assessed using a modified version of the methods of psychometrics. Winter, a professor of psychology, shows that essay responses, as opposed to "objective" psychometric instruments, are necessary to assess progress in critical thinking.

White's *Teaching and Assessing Writing* has much to offer those of us who still feel that we are learning about our professions. He is a professor of English at California State, San Bernardino, a former editor of the state university system's freshman English examination, and coordinator of that system's writing improvement program as well. He is committed to holistic scoring and explains how to adapt it to classroom composition teaching as well as programs in writing across the curriculum.

White explains that the student, to be scored fairly, must be allowed choice *within* one topic, not *among* several topics. He shows clearly from his own experience in teaching eighteenth-century British literature that asking students to choose among several topics will invariably put some students at a disadvantage. He also believes that topics must be carefully tested on small groups of students before being used collegewide.

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Teaching and Assessing Writing offers a detailed description of the grading system used at California State. The lowest scores are reserved for those whose papers "are lacking in focus and substance, that depart from the assigned topic, and exhibit consistent, serious writing faults." (pp. 126-27.) Scores at the high end are awarded to papers that explain and comment on ideas, their nature, and their source and employ a command of details. Papers in the middle range are those which ignore specific parts of the question or are "superficial" or "stereotyped" or "weak in wording or structure." (pp. 126-27.) White illustrates all these grade levels with examples from student papers.

One of the attractive aspects of White's book is its continual emphasis on critical thinking. He describes the skills that so many of us tend to focus on as merely "developmental skills" or "surface errors" and argues that what those of us who teach composition should actually concern ourselves with are "cognitive processes": the handling of paradox, irony, and the ability to use heuristic skills that will enable our students to solve problems. Community college teachers like myself who spend a great deal of time teaching developmental skills may not find ourselves completely comfortable with White's orientation. Nevertheless, it is my experience that when students are asked to respond to challenging topics and are tested using holistic scoring methods, they can rise to the mark and are able to analyze and synthesize ideas. An error-free paper, they learn, is not the same as a good paper.

As far as the teachers who grade papers are concerned, White suggests that English departments must exhibit "full sensitivity to the communal nature" of holistic scoring and must form "a working team committed to group judgments":

> No one should imagine the reading to be a vacation or a social occasion: This is a hard and tedious job that must be well done in a limited amount of time. Establishing an "interpretative community" is simply the most efficient way to get the job done properly. [p. 165.]

Those of us lucky enough to be in an English department that provides such a supportive environment will benefit ourselves as well as our students.

White's final chapter is devoted to carrying holistic scoring into the classroom. After the students turn in their essays, the instructor hands out carefully selected examples of previous student writing on the same topic. Norms are established through class discussion of these samples. Students come to understand, White argues, the value of complex ideas and sophisticated language by evaluating both student and professional writing. Even more significant than their learning to analyze and evaluate writing samples is their learning the *process* of writing.

While students at California State may be different from community college students, White's principles still hold. Though we may feel preoccupied with

teaching the conventions of the language, White suggests we do this in the context of paragraph development rather than through workbook exercises. Though we may emphasize commonplace rhetorical strategies, narration and description, say, rather than dwell upon complex analysis and texts, we still join White in his closing comment:

> When our teaching leads students to clear definitions of topics, well-stated critieria for assessment, and understandable procedures for revision, we can feel comfortable about our classroom teaching. For the more we know and the more we help our students know about assessing writing, the more effective our teaching will become. [p. 289.]

Winter, McClelland, and Stewart's *A New Case for the Liberal Arts* extends White's view about interpretative communities to the teaching of the humanities. These authors have found that highly integrated humanities programs "guided by faculty committed to and encouraging such integration, bring about greater cognitive growth than does studying the same material in separate courses without the consciously designed integrative rubric." (p. 166.) Several community colleges have such programs, and they have been the subject of repeated reports at CCHA regional conferences. (The curious reader should consult on this score *Mirrors of Mind* by Charles Roberts, J. Louis Schegel, Roberta Vandermast, and Helen Parramore Twigg of Valencia Community College, Orlando, Florida.)

As attractive as the idea of interpretative communities may be, it occurs to me that there are methods the isolated English teacher might use that would achieve the same results. First, teachers of English composition can provide students with opportunities for writing about topics that encourage the integration of ideas — for example, a cause-effect analysis of a student's own moral persuasion or a discussion of a student's views about sound management practices. The teacher of literature surveys is in a position to teach not the literature alone, but the political, historical, and psychological backgrounds of the literature as well. We can teach the principle of integration by modeling appropriate discourse in the classroom ourselves in the hope that the student will follow.

Interestingly enough, Winter and his coauthors are not humanities professors but professors of psychology committed to the methods of the social sciences. Nonetheless they point out that they "enjoyed their liberal arts education as undergraduates," that they now teach in liberal arts colleges, and that they are committed with equal firmness to "the ideal of liberal education." (pp. ix-x.) Their own orientation allows them to identify reasons why humanists are sometimes regarded with suspicion as "guardians" of the liberal arts not accustomed to thinking about the substantial empirical research on the effects of higher education. Liberal arts faculty have taken from the classical tradition

"both an emphasis on the power of rhetoric and form and a distrust of the empirical method" (p. 13) and therefore tend to describe the effect of a liberal arts education on the basis of anecdotal comments by those who "enjoyed" or "feel" they enjoyed their exposure to the liberal arts. On the other hand, social scientists do not appear to offer much in support of the value of the humanities since research by Newcomb (1943, 1958, 1967), Feldman and Newcomb (1969), and Heath (1968) does "not make a very impressive case for liberal arts education" and its cost. (p. 21.) Nonetheless, since White *et al.* do not believe that the liberal arts can be justified by faith alone, their study aims to supply humanists with grounds for assessing their work in a form acceptable to social scientists.

To this end, Winter and his coauthors offer a testing scenario that resembles the psychometric measures described by White in *Teaching and Assessing Writing*. For their part, Winter *et al.* value the essay since it is the best measure of "the actual critical thinking process" (p. 23) and requires students to integrate information. Tests employing the essay format include one described as a "concept attainment" test in which students are required to take a position on a controversial topic by comparing and contrasting two specific situations. Another test asks students to read about subjects such as child-rearing, nuclear power, or abortion and then develop a point of view in five minutes, a situation Winter and his coauthors describe as an "intellectual flexibity" test. After articulating their point of view, students are then required to rebut their argument, and their ability to do equally well on both arguments is taken as a measure of their success with the assignment. When tests such as these were administered, it was discovered that students in private liberal arts colleges fared better than those in a state teachers college and that both groups of students scored higher than those in a state community college.

The tests described by Winter *et al.* are graded in a setting much like that described in White's book. Students are given positive marks for their biases if those biases are marked by subtlety. Students are marked down if they employ "global endorsement" for their point of view, if they avoid a sense of logic and distinction, if they avoid a principle or focus. Students who can remain consistent while "seeing" both sides of an argument receive the highest scores. What is finally at issue here is what the authors call a "displaced analytical flexibility" that "makes liberal education an object of such scorn and attack by the totalitarian or authoritarian mind" (pp. 32-33) and also makes for good lawyers, good administrators, and good statesmen in a democracy or limited monarchy. One interesting aspect of this "displaced analytical flexibility" noted by the authors is that it would appear to contribute little to a student's sense of creativity. In the private liberal arts colleges they studied, the authors felt that the emphasis on conservative "critical-interpretative" and historical disciplines

had "no measurable effects on creativity or emotional sensitivity." (p. 81.) Furthermore, while the liberal arts make a contribution to leadership style, the authors indicate that "success in creating motivation for leadership may work against the deeply held value of equality" (p. 178) endemic to public institutions rather than the private liberal arts colleges where the skills associated with the humanities are most assiduously cultivated.

Nonetheless, Winter *et al.* continue to value the liberal arts for the following reasons: first, liberal arts education increases students' capacity for mature adaptation to the environment when students encounter new experiences; second, liberal arts education increases students' critical thinking and conceptual skills by demanding that they integrate knowledge; third, liberal arts education increases students' independence of thought, instrumentality, and self-definition by setting them free from elaborate restraints on behavior and thought; finally, liberal arts education increases students' motivation for leadership by endowing them with a sense of being special. Apart from these points, Winter and his coauthors offer much valuable information about the administration and scoring of essays used to take the measure of a liberal arts education. I think that their general emphasis on critical thinking and the essay bears even on noncomposition courses at the community college level as well as the concerns of writing across the curriculum programs.

Three Reports on Curriculum Reform and Excellence in Higher Education

Max Reichard

To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education, by William J. Bennett. Washington: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1984. 44 pp. $2.00.

Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education, by the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education. Washington: National Institute of Education, 1984. 99 pp. $4.50.

Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community, by Frederick Rudolph *et al.* Washington: The Association of American Colleges, 1985. 47 pp. $4.00.

THE FACULTY OF American community colleges, in particular the humanities faculty, is acutely aware of the conflicting values in any discussion of excellence in higher education. Coherent values are based on tradition, and we have precious little tradition to fall back on except the "traditional" role of the university. Some leaders in the community-college movement (Can we still call it that?) argue persuasively that we, community colleges, must be part of "traditional" higher education if we are to retain any semblance of excellence.[1] But what does that mean? In our efforts to maintain "traditional" higher-education functions for community colleges, have we not frozen the term "higher education" into some romantic image of the past? Even if that image of the past were real, the reality itself is no more.

It is possible then that the conflicts over the issue of excellence in community colleges is a form of painful self-criticism based on an ideal that does not exist and perhaps never has. But to our rescue have come not one but three national reports on the problem of excellence in colleges and universities; we are not alone. All segments of higher education now share our nostalgia for a lost, ideal, and golden past.

The three reports were published in 1984-85 within three months of one another: *Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education* (National Institute of Education); *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education,* by William J. Bennett (National Endow-

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ment for the Humanities); and *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community* (Association of American Colleges).[2] The three reports have in common timing, purpose (to investigate the problem of declining quality in American postsecondary/higher education), and solution — that the salvation of our colleges and of our civilization lies in returning the liberal arts and humanities to the center of the college curriculum. The solution, heart-warming to all humanities teachers (perhaps particularly at community colleges), is hard to argue with. It is a solution, however, for a problem that is poorly defined, narrowly conceived, and without historical evidence to support its reality. We, therefore, must be wary of the solution.

Integrity in the College Curriculum

FROM THE BEGINNING this report makes it clear that higher education is in a "profound crisis" evidenced in the "decay" of the curriculum and in the role of the faculty in "nurturing decay." The decay is most evident in the "decline" and "serious weakness" of the humanities and liberal arts in American colleges. (pp. 1-2.)

The report on "the meaning and purpose of the baccalaureate degree" then asks: "Is the curriculum an invitation to philosophic and intellectual growth or a quick exposure to . . . a particular vocation? Or is it both?" With these familiar questions *Integrity* restricts its focus to curriculum concerns and quickly gives us the answer. "Certainty on such matters disappeared . . . in the late nineteenth century." The great tradition of higher education (the argument goes on), based in the liberal arts, broke down at the end of the nineteenth century as the diversity of colleges and universities made it impossible to maintain one, true curriculum. In the twentieth century the demand for access led to further confusion of the "primary purposes" of education. (pp. 2-5.)[3]

Of the three reports this one has the most sense of a historical perspective, no doubt due to the influence of Frederick Rudolph on the select committee.[4] Nevertheless, *Integrity* violates what we know about nineteenth-century America and assumes certainty about what we do not know. If, indeed, as this report suggests, the educational curriculum was firmly rooted in a consensual community of values about education, work, and politics, then American social historians must need rethink what they thought they knew about America in the nineteenth century.

This is not just a gratuitous slap on the wrist. All three of these reports make assumptions about the past which are doubtful and even harmful. For *Integrity* to argue that "certainty on [curriculum] matters . . . disappeared" suggests that since "certainty" once existed, we need to strive for it and can have it. This is not only inconsistent with the reality of the nineteenth century, but it is an affront to

a basic truth of life in all times, and that is that people must struggle with ambiguities. The more freedoms they demand, as they did in the nineteenth century, the more they must deal with ambiguity.

There are few surprises in *Integrity*. If the "decline" has been from that ideal educational community of the nineteenth century to the "weakness and confusion" of today, then we must strengthen and clarify our curriculum, make it foolproof, develop the perfect teaching method, and invent mistake-proof instruments of assessing student progress, programs, and faculty so that we once again have certainty. Most of this report tells us how to do that.

To one surprise many teacher/scholars will take personal exception: "Ideal teachers, of course, never allow themselves to accept the false dichotomy between teaching and research and study: they embrace both and are dominated by neither." (p. 37.) It is precisely that kind of inanity which leads young instructors to become cynical about teaching. As Walker Percy, recently interviewed about writing and teaching, declared: "I don't see how anybody could teach and write at the same time. It's hard work. . . . [It taps the same reservoir] if you're conscientious."[5]

The *intellectual* dichotomy between the two may be false, but the reality is that after three hours in the classroom, one is drained of creative energy. Nevertheless, one goes on with class preparations for the next day, with committee meetings, advising students, and other professional responsibilities. Of course we are "dominated" by teaching if we are, as Percy says, conscientious. But if we get no public recognition and no public reward for teaching, how long can we remain conscientious and resist being dominated by the public pressure to do research and to publish? There is no answer to that question. We spend our professional lives juggling responsibilities and struggling with the ironies of the rewards and the possible absurdity of all our creative efforts. For the authors of *Integrity*, however, there are no ambiguities in research, teaching, or, for that matter, in civic and familial responsibilities.

To assert that we should not be "dominated by either" after two pages of rhetoric about the need to shift our emphasis from research to teaching leads one to question the sense of reality of the committee that wrote *Integrity*. But then adding to the sense of disbelief, the report concludes that what we really need is to associate ourselves in teaching associations "replete with . . . professional organization, journals, and arbiters of professional matters." (p. 38.) Indeed, that is precisely what we do not need — a new sacerdotal approach to teaching. Rather we must have commitment to the central thrust of teaching and learning: fostering a process of maturation, of enfranchisement, of freeing the individual from control of arbitrary authority, of guiding our students to a sense of sovereignty and independence. It is questionable whether that can or

should be done in a coherent and unified way either in all areas of higher learning or in all areas of American society. Traditions of localism and diversity are strong in American education, and as the second of our reports hints, perhaps those traditions are a key strength of American education.

Involvement in Learning

AN NIE-SPONSORED study, *Involvement* has twenty-seven recommendations for improving three critical "conditions of excellence": student involvement, high expectations, and assessment and feedback. A great deal of effort went into not only the preparation of this study, but also its dissemination through regional conferences in the spring of 1985, involving thousands of educators, administrators, and professors. Anyone who was involved in these conferences, "Quality in American Higher Education," would have been struck by the diversity of the people speaking for higher education and the diversity of the institutions represented. That was altogether fitting, for *Involvement* makes the claim that American higher education is strong and that its strength rests on its diversity.

There is nothing profound or revealing in this study, but it contains, in abbreviated form, a great deal of useful information about higher education and what current research says about higher education. Like the other studies, it is concerned about "the state of undergraduate education, in particular, about the status of first- and second-year students and erosion of liberal learning." (p. 1.) There is indeed reason for concern about these two matters, for they are closely tied together. For someone teaching at a community college, particularly in the humanities, that statement rings clear and true. If there are no common solutions, perhaps we can agree on a common problem: the status of liberal learning in the first two years of college.

The thrust of *Involvement*, however, is aimed at how to solve that problem. It focuses on requirements and standards. And since colleges tend to control "inputs" and not "outputs," *Involvement* encourages strengthening graduation standards and focusing attention on what students have learned. In order to do this, colleges must provide evidence of "demonstrable improvements" in various student characteristics, develop "public . . . standards of performance for degrees," and be "cost-effective" in implementing these "improvements." *Involvement* is, of course, a policy document, and the bottom line of a policy document is to reassure us that a policy is forthcoming: "Adequate measures of educational excellence must thus be couched in terms of *student outcomes* —primarily such academic outcomes as knowledge, intellectual capacities, and skills." (pp. 14-15.)

The study group, throughout the report, communicates a sense of mature reflection on the issues raised. Its members valued the learning they experi-

enced in the process of trying to develop a coherent product. One wonders if that process did not deserve more than a passing nod. Part of our problem in education is language and communication — how does one communicate without communicating *some thing?* And if one communicates "some thing," given our frame of values, that "some thing" must have the *imprimatur* of a science (or at least its method) and the value of a technology (the "some thing" must be applicable, it must have pragmatic results). By the time we have gone through this process of abstraction, we have lost the magic of the original process or insight or intuition. So, while *Involvement in Learning*'s theme is diversity and its value (the value of that diversity was revealed in the process of dialogue engaged in by the study group), the report ends up reducing that wondrous human diversity in learning to prescriptions for assuring us that learning did take place. Do we really need that kind of certitude?

By no means should we make light of the philosophical and cultural problem that faces us here. After almost a century of studying education and learning "scientifically," what do we have? Yes, we have centralization, bureaucratization, some coherence, some uniformity, management controls, and so forth. But what have we learned about teaching and learning? One may argue that the process has been fun. No argument here. Perhaps, however, it is time for a radical departure in the way we talk about learning — radical in the pure sense (*radix*=root). For this is not an advocacy of relativism as another escape from reductionist scientism. But a radical departure is necessary.

Is it not a radical proposal to say that we should use the insights and experiences of the humanities to study, reflect on, and come to an understanding of learning? Is it not radical to propose that we abandon the use of scientific measurements of learning to assess what and how many "humanistic" insights our students have learned? Let us consider the possibility, inherent in the humanities, that we, each one of us, construct *all* the reality "out there." If that proposition is a possibility, and our sense of the truth of the humanities tells us it is a probability, then how radical is it to question instruments of measurement and assessment that are geared to the norm and the mean? Indeed one branch of scientific thought, the cognitive sciences, has been for some time exploring not the reality "out there," but the "reality" we create in relationship to the world out there. From Jean Piaget to Jerome Bruner there has been a growing appreciation of a Greek (humanistic) insight — that learning is a process of struggle (dialogue) between the individual and the world and not the imposition of some external reality on a *tabula rasa*.[6] If we believe that dialogue is the key to learning, that learning is an activity in which an individual acts and therefore is changed, then we must stop relying on behavioral learning theory that reduces students either to robots or passive audiences. Education is caught on its own petard — testing, measuring, evaluation of performance, cost-

efficiency, requirements, standards, assessment, feedback. Listen to the language we use — that all three of these reports use. What does all this have to do with learning? If we, the teachers of the humanities, do not reclaim our own legacy who will? We already know who has.

Involvement is straightforward in presenting the conflict in values between educators' need for quality controls (standards and measurements) and the diversity of American higher education, but it, like the other reports, gets around that conflict with an implied comparison between education today and some mystic past. "The bachelor's degree has lost its potential to foster the shared values and knowledge that bind us together as a society." If that "potential" was ever real, it was based on the shared values of WASPs. Indeed the dynamics of American history have ensured that this "potential" was not so much lost as it was always an impossible dream. *Involvement* goes on: "Our recommendations seek to reverse the trend . . . and to restore liberal education to its central role in undergraduate education." (pp. 3, 10.) Again — the impossible dream based on an improbable past. Among the fallacies in this argument is a very simple one: terms and language do not necessarily mean today what they meant 150 years ago. So, for example, our "liberal education" — let's say a course in Western civilization — was a "useful" and "practical" course of study for Thomas Jefferson. *It was a vocational course* (our term "vocational").

Involvement in Learning is a readable compendium of ideas for students, faculty, and administrators. The "Recommendations to Students" (p. 77) I have given my own college-bound children to read. I do not believe the report will have much influence in improving the "critical conditions of excellence"; however, the self-study process was worth the effort.

To Reclaim a Legacy

LIKE THE OTHER two reports, *To Reclaim a Legacy* is presented as a timely response to a crisis: "The time is right for constructive reform of American education." (p. ii.) The solution is similar — reform through renewal of the liberal arts, in particular the humanities, since they are "the best that has been said, thought, written and otherwise expressed about the human experience." (p. 3.) Unlike *Integrity* or *Involvement*, this is clearly the work of one person, William Bennett, now secretary of education, then an already outspoken and controversial chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Because of his knack for saying things that get the attention of the national press, Bennett's ideas have received a great deal of publicity — much more than the other two reports. As a teacher of the humanities, I welcome the increased public awareness of and concern for my profession; however, one must deplore the largely uncritical acceptance of Bennett's formula for improving education. *To Reclaim a Legacy* is more prescriptive and narrower than either *Integrity* or

Involvement. And — something of an irony — its historical perspective is more fallacious.

Bennett asks three questions: Why study the humanities? How should the humanities be taught and learned? How well are the humanities being taught and learned on the nation's campuses? The first question is answered in less than two pages (in a report of over forty pages). In addition to a few quotes, Bennett's answer is that the humanities deal with "life's enduring, fundamental questions: What is justice? What should be loved? What deserves to be defended? What is noble and what is base?" Perhaps Bennett believes the question "Why?" has been answered elsewhere; perhaps he is uncomfortable with that question, for he answers it with other questions, most of which begin with "what." But in the main Bennett's response to that question is characteristic of the report as a whole, which seeks a quick fix, a quick solution to a thorny problem.

The second question, "How should the humanities be taught and learned?" is answered in three parts. The first part, "good teaching," is hard to argue with. Good teachers should be well prepared, have a mastery of subject matter, and be enthsiastically "engaged" with their material. The second part identifies features common to any good curriculum: balance between breadth and depth, use of original texts, continuity, programs related to faculty strength, and a sense that the humanities are central to the curriculum. Again it is difficult to argue with what Bennett has written here. The third part of the response begins with the question "What should be read?" Here what he did *not* write about good teaching or curriculum says volumes about what Bennett tells us should be read. For Bennett never answers the question of how the humanities should be learned. Students are nonexistent in his analyses and prescriptions. The result is superior teachers, a challenging curriculum, and a fine list of books that everyone should read, but there is no sense of the dynamics of teaching and learning. Instead, an image is created of an ideal classroom setting where great ideas and creations are poured down a funnel into the passive brains of students.

Without a backward look, Bennett goes on to his third question: "How well are the humanities being taught?" In the very first sentence of his response he tells us: "The humanities are being taught and learned with uneven success." Then, without batting an eye, Mr. Bennett says, "Evidence of this decline is compelling." (p. 14.) At this point one starts reading backwards, assuming something was missed. Nowhere, however, in the previous fourteen pages was there any discussion of education in the past or even an implied comparison with the present. Once again we find quality and excellence being defined in terms of an assumption about past quality. To be fair to Mr. Bennett, he does then follow up with evidence, albeit far from compelling. His evidence is the decline in course requirements in the humanities since the mid-sixties. For example, in 1966, 89 percent of colleges required foreign language study for the bachelor's degree,

while only 47 percent had this requirement in 1983 (in actual numbers, of course, there were twice as many Americans studying foreign languages — and a greater variety of languages — in 1983 than there were in 1966). But what is this evidence of? It is evidence of a decline in curriculum requirements and certainly not evidence of a decline in teching and learning.

With that kind of evidence and less, Bennett goes on to pronounce the state of the humanities curriculum: "The past twenty years have seen a steady erosion in the place of the humanities in the undergraduate curriculum and in the coherence of the curriculum generally." (p. 19.) This statement is ahistorical on several counts. First, Bennett has confused the historical changes that occurred in the structure and politics of institutions of higher education in the 1960s with the place of the humanities. It is illogical to argue about the decline of the humanities in the 1960s, for he is really concerned about the changes in education as a whole. Second, Bennett's worry about the status of the humanities in the curriculum over the past twenty years could benefit from a study of the struggles over the humanities at Columbia, Hopkins, and Chicago for the past 100 years. Third, Bennett treats higher education as if it were isolated from other institutions and values in society. Are there no demographic changes, at the very least, that ought to be taken into account in a discussion of structural changes in higher education? Finally, on a more personal note, I was a pre-1966 undergraduate of both a private and a public institution. I should have a sense of the decline he is discussing. But many of the problems I encountered then, as did my peers, were the problems that Bennett maintains are due to the decline in requirements over the past twenty years. If there has been a "decline," then I believe *Integrity* and *Involvement* are closer to the truth in assuming that it has been in progress for three or four generations. Indeed, all these discussions are based on assumptions, which in turn are supported by anecdotal evidence and by comparisons of terms whose meaning has changed profoundly. For example, the terms "liberal" and "vocational" meant something quite different 100 or 200 years ago.

William Bennett's purpose, however, is not to analyze education or its history; his concerns are political. He belongs to that spectrum of intellectual thought that wants to return to the "good old days" when education and other institutions maintained necessary social control. Isn't it strange how we worry about excellence now that we have to tighten our belts? Suddenly the quality of students is down; we need standards for admission; we need to teach faculty how to assess; we need to control who graduates. Suddenly the good old days —when "men were men" and "higher education" was "higher" — seem now like the golden days. Who is this reform for? What legacy are we reclaiming, and for whom? How do we reconcile this myth of the past with the knowledge that in the eighteenth century Scottish universities became renowned for training tech-

nicians? With the development of land-grant universities in the United States in the nineteenth century? Why do universities sneer at vocational education and then do it themselves? Why do community college leaders sneer at vocational education and fear that we will lose our place in higher education? Why is the "Return to the Humanities Essential," as an AP headline insisted following release of *Legacy?* If it is "because the consequences of slighting the humanities" result in "graduates being unable to write lucidly or reason clearly and rigorously," then why are verbal scores of college graduates in the sciences higher than those of humanities graduates? What is reflected in this report is a yearning for lost community, for lost status; a yearning for a mythic medieval hierarchy and social stability; a yearning for the stability of the authority of the university and of the college professor.

It is difficut to disagree with many of Bennett's assertions, for most of us teaching in the humanities are caught between a nostalgic ideal of humanistic education and the realities of modern higher education. But neither that ideal nor the realities are analyzed in *To Reclaim A Legacy*, which suffers from a deplorable lack of historical perspective. Nor is this lack peculiar to this work of Bennett's. In another essay, published in early 1983, Bennett argued: "In the past, the aim of humanities education was the cultivation of free men and women — men and women freed from ignorance and callousness."[7] Even if that were a quote from some past ideal, it no more reflects any reality, at any time, than Bennett's ideals reflect present reality. One is particularly struck by his inclusion of women in the statement — he could not possibly be that ignorant of women's history. In response to his 1983 essay, one thoughtful critic of contemporary higher education, Zelda Gamson, wrote that Bennett was preaching "a jeremiad" and "lurking in it — and in the hearts of many academics — is a yearning for the 'One True Content' that all students in this country could study."[8]

Like most jeremiads or calls to repentance, Bennett's version of the future is based on a golden age of higher education in the past. Nostalgia is more powerful than history. Over ten years ago, Lionel Trilling, in "The Uncertain Future of the Humanistic Educational Ideal," warned us to be wary of a legacy that has been claimed and given up only to be reclaimed once again. He used the previous seventy-five-year history of Columbia University to illustrate the struggle between the legacy of the humanities and the pragmatic needs of industrial society, and he suggests that an ambiguous relationship exists between work, American education, and American values.[9]

Just as Richard Hofstadter argued that despite the strain of anti-intellectualism there has been in American culture a strong disposition to admire and sustain the life of the mind and higher learning,[10] so also, Trilling points out,

social critics have argued that the American urban working class has felt itself in an unsatisfactory relationship to high culture, that they wanted more than middle-class things, that they and their children were being challenged by history to become "cultured," and that they were ambivalent about this culture. For Bennett, and for many of us educated in the humanistic ideal, this "culture" is self-evidently good and valuable. But as Trilling demonstrates in the history of even an elite ("traditional") university like Columbia, there has not been, over the past century, any consensus about the humanistic ideal and how well it meets the needs of an industrial society. Is it any wonder that many of our "new," "nontraditional," post-World War II students were wary that "learning may be a snare" and that, rather than reinforcing values, *their* values were being undermined? What legacy are we trying to recapture, and for whom? Another example may suggest the insidious nature of a belief in the One True Content.

In *The New Radicalism in America, 1899-1963*, Christopher Lasch writes about radicalism in ambivalent terms.[11] On the one hand, radicals talked of "liberating creative energies"; on the other hand, they wanted to be certain that *their* view of society and culture would shape American society. One of Lasch's "new" radicals was Jane Addams. And what was new or radical about Ms. Addams? Her identification with the "other half" of society. But Lasch questions whether her identification and that of other radicals was really with the other half or with the expectation that the other half would become like her "better half." So, for Jane Addams and her contemporaries, education — liberal, humanistic education — had a utilitarian purpose. It functioned to socialize people, to help them adapt to the industrial order and therefore accept it. If this is so, is there any wonder that Lionel Trilling finds ambivalence about the humanistic ideal both in its history at Columbia and in its push-pull effect on the new, nontraditional students sweeping into (or being swept into) American higher education after World War II?

Jane Addams' purpose was humanitarian — for her education was a tool, a technique. As Lasch suggests, however, that technique may be, indeed is likely to become, a means of social control. Rather than cultivating free men and free women, both Addams and Bennett would use the humanities to create the kind of citizens they wish to have. Are not the humanities misused when they are looked to for a formula or a principle of authority? That Bennett's purpose and that of Addams were similar suggests that Bennett has confused the humanities and humanitarianism. Without free inquiry the humanities are one more technique of social control and by definition are no longer humanities.[12]

We seem to have forgotten the essence of the humanistic ideal. Aristotle believed that human beings were set apart from animals by the capacity for rational speech (*logos*). In Greek life the ideal community was one in which people engaged in *logos*, or dialogue. From such rational discourse or dialogue

would come common, cooperative action *(praxis)*. The ideals of *logos* and *praxis* set the stage for the historical moment in which the humanistic ideal was born. It may be a product of its culture and time, but it seems to be an ideal that recognizes some basic truths about the way man thinks, learns, and takes action. It is on the humanistic ideal of *logos* and *praxis* that Paulo Freire argues for dialogue as the key to education and learning.[13] For Freire, dialogue is a process of inquiry between two or more people as a result of which both must be "changed," and, having made choices, both will be more free. When we emphasize that the key to the humanities is the content of a specified list of books that, according to Bennett, every educated person should read, we are not emphasizing change and freedom, but control, management, and a resulting loss in moral autonomy. We have confused the humanistic ideal of struggle, inquiry, dialogue, and decision with a technique born of a humanitarian impulse. Action for self-fulfillment replaces reflection, dialogue, and action for a common good.

Perhaps Trilling was reminding us, through a synoptic history of the humanities educational ideal, that we need to pause and wonder about any educational panacea or learning utopia. One humanistic ideal may be "to provide continuity, to educate each generation about the intellectual, spiritual, and moral birthright to which it is heir."[14] But as Bennett himself recognizes at times in *Legacy*, how we do that is a little more complicated than a good reading list. John Dewey argued more than fifty years ago that "restoring integration between man's beliefs about the world in which he lives and his beliefs about the values and purposes that should direct his conduct is the deepest problem of modern life."[15] Modern life is based on a rationality that values action without reflection because action is pragmatic and consistent with our belief in progress. So we are left with an assumption that for everything there is a technique and an expert technician — how to have sex, how "to parent," how to die, and so on. In *The Culture of Narcissism* Christopher Lasch argued that the use of the humanities as a technique for "life adjustment" is nothing other than a logical outcome of the contemporary premise that education should solve every problem because there are no unsolvable problems.

Bennett's political self-righteousness has led him to confuse the soft-thinking emphasis on "relevance" in the 1960s with a decline in education. As Eugene Genovese and Christopher Lasch argued at the end of that turbulent decade, the demand of the New Left for curriculum relevance "by its very nature . . . reinforces the vulgar instrumentalism underlying bourgeois ideology and practice."[16] Indeed the demand for relevance was symptomatic of the failure by many left-wing teachers in the humanities to avoid the same kind of "vulgar instrumentalism" that Bennett is calling for today. Is not the only significant

difference that the call in the 1980s is from the Right and that "relevance" is being replaced by "accountability"?

The humanities were abused when, instead of insisting on a dynamic process of inquiry leading to moral choices, we look to the humanities for a formula, for a principle of authority that will allow us to avoid both inquiry and choice. Inquiry, dialogue, and choice are central to teaching and learning in the humanities. As Freire has stated, "Knowledge is not static" — it is the most dynamic of pursuits. It involves and necessitates education, which in turn requires communication. And dynamic communication means dialogue, a dialogue as a result of which both teacher and learner are changed. This is our legacy.

Notes

[1] See, for example, Richard C. Richardson, *Literacy in the Open-Access College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983); Arthur Cohen and Florence Brawer, *The American Community College*; George Vaughan, "Can Community Colleges Offer Opportunity and Excellence?" *AACJC Journal* (October-November 1985).

[2] *Involvement in Learning* (October 1984) is the final report of the Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education and is an outgrowth of the work of the National Commission on Excellence in Education and its report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983). See, also, *Starting with Students: Promising Approaches in American Higher Education* (December 1984), a report on higher education made to the National Commission. *To Reclaim a Legacy* (November 1984) was the final report of the Study Group on the State of Learning in the Humanities in Higher Education appointed by William J. Bennett, then chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. *Integrity in the College Curriculum* (February 1985) is the report of the Project on Redefining the Meaning and Purpose of Baccalaureate Degrees and is therefore the least concerned with education and excellence in community colleges (although R. H. McCabe served on a select committee which "guided" the project).

[3] The complete quote on page 2 is: "Is the curriculum an invitation to philosophic growth or a quick exposure to the skills of a particular vocation? Or is it both? Certainty on such matters disappeared under the impact of new knowledge and electives in the late nineteenth century."

[4] See his *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977).

[5] *Conversations With Walker Percy*, ed. L. A. Larson and V. A. Kramer (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1985), p. 274.

[6] See, for example, an excellent essay by Jerome Bruner, "Under Construction," *The New York Review of Books*, March 27, 1986. See also Bruner's *In Search of Mind: Essays in Autobiography* (New York: Harper, 1983), and Peter Caws, *New Republic*, September 12, 1970.

[7] William J. Bennett, "The Shattered Humanities," *AAHE Bulletin* (February 1983).

[8] Zelda F. Gamson, response, in *AAHE Bulletin (February 1983)*.

[9] In *The American Scholar*, vol. 44 (Winter 1974-75).

[10] *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963). See also W. E. B. DuBois, "Education and Work," in *The Seventh Son: The Thought and Writings of W. E. B. DuBois* (New York: Vintage, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 558-76, a commencement address delivered in 1930; and Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), vol. 2, pp. 733 ff.

[11] (New York: Vintage, 1967)

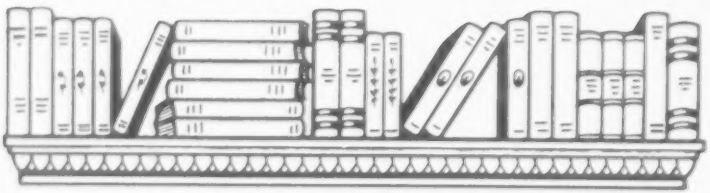
[12] See Max Reichard, "The Conflicting Aims of Humanitarianism and the Humanities," *The Community College Humanist* (December 1983).

[13] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1968).

[14] William J. Bennett, "The Humanities, the Universities, and Public Policy," *Educational Record* (Summer 1981).

[15] As quoted in Bernard Murchland, "The Eclipse of the Liberal Arts," *Change* (November 1976).

[16] "The Education and the University We Need Now," *New York Review of Books* (October 9, 1969). Lasch's ideas are further developed in *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1978).



REPORTS

AACJC Humanities Policy Statement

RESPONDING TO WILLIAM J. Bennett's *To Reclaim a Legacy* (discussed above by Max Reichard), the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges developed the following statement. It derives from a roundtable discussion funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, discussion of a draft version at the five 1985 CCHA conferences, and responses by college presidents and faculty. The AACJC board of directors has adopted the statement as a policy recommendation, and the CCHA board of directors has endorsed it. The following abridgment does not include the philosophical introduction or the background section included in the original document. —Ed.

Recommendations to Community College Leaders

THE FERMENT IN higher education, reflected by the many calls for educational reform from all quarters, suggests that now is an opportune time for educational leaders to speak out on behalf of the importance of the humanities to the associate degree offered by community colleges. To that end, the following recommendations are offered:

Recommendation 1. Educational policy concerning the humanities and their place in the community college curriculum should be framed within the context of an overall policy on a liberal or general education program of study.

Recommendation 2. Study in the humanities should be a required part of *every* degree program offered by community colleges.

Recommendation 3. Study in the humanities *disciplines* should be required beyond existing college requirements for such courses as composition, public speaking, and communications.

In order to assure that the humanities maintain their proper place in the curriculum, it is crucial that the following degree requirements be made public and manifest via the endorsement of the highest policy and administrative bodies — trustees, presidents, academic deans, and other administrators. Hence:

Recommendation 4. A minimum of six semester hours in the humanities for the degree of Associate in Applied Science;

Recommendation 5. A minimum of nine semester hours in the humanities for the degree of Associate in Science; and

Recommendation 6. A minimum of twelve semester hours in the humanities for the degree of Associate in Arts.

The *manner* of teaching college courses, as well as the *content* of courses, especially courses with specific humanities content, is vital to the educational process. Instruction in the humanities must engage students extensively in activities that take them beyond the mere acquisition of facts and the comprehension of principles and theories. Students must be asked to understand the human

circumstances that the materials address and to consider critically alternative points of view. Therefore:

Recommendation 7. Humanities courses should develop students' abilities to participate in reflective discourse, to question, analyze, and understand. To develop these abilites, humanities classes must include extensive reading, writing, speaking, and critical analysis of the perspectives, cultures, and traditions that make up our intellectual heritage.

Community colleges serve a wide and varied population, with the typical student body reflecting diversity in age, sex, ethnicity, and interests. The faculty of these institutions, being most familiar with student needs, should take the lead in building appropriate humanities programs. Therefore:

Recommendation 8. The faculty within each institution should develop a comprehensive plan for helping its students achieve knowledge of and sophistication in the humanities. This plan should include a coherent program of courses in sequence, with clear indication of which courses in the humanities are basic, which courses presuppose others, which courses are best taken concurrently with others, and which courses constitute appropriate selection for students who will take limited coursework in the humanities.

It is important that good teaching be the basis for faculty promotion and recognition. To encourage and assist good teachers to continue in the profession and to stimulate others to develop good teaching skills, three recommendations are offered:

Recommendation 9. Evidence of good teaching should be used as an explicit criterion for hiring, promotion, tenure, and other forms of professional recognition. This will demand the development of appropriate measures of teaching ability and effectiveness.

Recommendation 10. Faculty development resources should be used to help faculty develop their teaching skills and further their knowledge of their discipline. Full-time faculty, and in every instance possible, part-time faculty as well, should be encouraged to attend the meetings and conferences and read the publications of those academic organizations which are increasingly turning their attention to the quality of teaching in our colleges.

Recommendation 11. Funds should be made available to college libraries and learning resource centers for the purchase of materials that support research, provide the basis for cultural enrichment, and constitute resources for programs in the humanities.

Humanities studies do not, and should not, end in high school. Neither should they begin and end in college. Courses of humanistic study can and should be integrated so that high schools and colleges can build on the habits of mind and knowledge acquired by students in their early classes and developed in later ones. Therefore, it is recommended that articulation processes be developed to meet these goals:

Recommendation 12. Governing boards, administrators, and faculties of community colleges, high schools, and four-year colleges, should work together to plan a unified and coherent humanities curriculum for their students.

It is urgent that these recommendations be circulated widely to college administrators, legislative officials, and college faculty as well as to the public and private presses.

Literary Theory and Literature Teachers: New Life for Introductory Courses

Carole L. Edmonds and Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr.

FACULTY TEACHING LITERATURE, especially introductory or "core" courses in community colleges, have been discouraged lately by the drop in enrollments. Where once they taught two or three literature sections in a semester, most now only teach literature once or twice a year. The research surveys of the Association of Departments of English demonstrate that the student movement away from literature courses is a statistical as well as a perceived reality.[1]

Within professional circles, attacks on student attitudes and values ("job-training oriented," "crassly commercial," "techno-chemical"), television, the high schools, and the other usual targets have increased. At the institutional level, literature departments argue for small sections of "vital" literature courses, vying for resources with other liberal arts departments and programs making similar pleas. In every faculty lounge and conference lobby, literature teachers decry the enrollment decline. But they continue to teach these shrinking courses using the same critical and pedagogical approaches that are, at least in part, responsible for the student withdrawal from literature classes.

Our point is this: instead of blaming the students, the colleges, and the culture that contains and engenders them, teachers of literature need to reconsider, revise, and reinvigorate their classroom practice.

The typical two-year college English faculty member today is a white male between the ages of thirty and fifty, trained in graduate departments dominated by the New Criticism of the 1930s and 1940s. New Criticism emphasized examination of the components of a text and largely ignored the reader, the writer, and the social context. James J. Kinney has observed that the New Criticism grew out of the modernist aesthetic in which "the humanist turned away from the chaos and absurdity of man's created universe at large, to find solace in the . . . work of art as object, as an ordered structure of parts . . . and that early in the century New Criticism taught many people to read." "But,"

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Kinney continues, "by the 1960's the doctrine and terminology were omnipresent, and by 1963 Northrop Frye, in an essay for new graduate students, could assert that their lives as scholarly critics would be devoted to classifying genres and describing literary structure."[2] In its pedagogy, New Criticism emphasized the emotional coolness of aesthetic distance and the idea of the autonomy of the literary work. Concepts of literary texts as useful came into question, and the previous notion of the function of literature in the classroom as a means of teaching moral lessons became inappropriate — or problematic, for how often, especially in the two-year college, do students still see the only possible value of literature in finding instructive morals, *i.e.*, finding the *use* of it? The resulting conflict between teacher and student has been the basis of what we have thought of as the eternal battle to "sophisticate" our students' views of literature.

Now it is clear that a revolution in literary critical theory is well under way. The dominance of the New Criticism as the reigning theory of literature has been challenged by a variety of approaches with fundamentally different concerns. There is probably no English teacher in America who is not now familiar with at least the terms of this critical revolution: structuralism, semiotics, deconstruction, reader-response, feminist criticism, speech-act theory, Marxist, and new historical criticism. What is less evident to America's English teachers is the idea that these new approaches might offer help in the "eternal battle." With some engagement with these new theoretical perspectives, teachers of basic literature courses can develop new pedagogy that will encourage more thoughtful reading, in some cases validating the student-reader's personal experience, in others bringing the text into relationship with the culture and other disciplines.

With this idea in mind, in 1985 the Community College Humanities Association sponsored a summer institute for teachers of introductory literature courses on the new theories of literature and their pedagogical implications. In the month-long institute held at the University of Massachusetts and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the participants studied the New Critical tradition, the structuralist and deconstructionist responses to it, and, in greater detail, reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and new historical criticism. Each teacher arrived in Amherst with a plan to modify, revise, augment, or reconstruct an introductory literature course in response to material they hoped to absorb at the institute. After six or seven months of thought and experimentation, the teacher participants reported to us on how their plans worked out when implemented in the classroom.

During their month of concentrated study, the participants explored the ideas inherent in contemporary critical theories of literature both in the abstract *and* in concrete relations to a set of typical texts used in introductory courses.

Thus, even before leaving Amherst, they had been able to form some idea of how to apply the new approaches to familiar texts.

The literary theories themselves ranged from the linguistic and philosophical to the historical and contextual. The deconstructionist position of Jacques Derrida argues that signs — especially words — are arbitrary. We determine a word through differences from other words, not other concepts. For Derrida, then, the indeterminacy of all symbol systems — anthropological, linguistic, scientific — becomes evident. All language, including literary language, is a finite system with infinite play; we can never locate a transcendent terminus in it. Derrida's term "differance" is a play on the question of presence or absence (it is and is not a word) to determine a trace of presence. Derrida suggests interesting new goals for education:

> From this language it is necessary to free ourselves, not actually to try to free ourselves from it for this is impossible without forgetting our historical condition. But to imagine it, not actually to free ourselves from it, for that would deprive us of the light of sense. But to resist it as far as possible.

Deconstructionist critics characteristically emphasize the open and endless search for meaning through endless "play" with the literary text, as contrasted to the drive toward closure and the search for unity on the part of New Critical theory. A deconstructionist posture legitimizes all discourse, thus making it easier to connect literary texts to works in other fields such as history, anthropology, folklore, and sociology. Language — discourse — is where things happen, the space of consciousness.

As delineated by Hazard Adams during the first week of the institute, deconstructionism worked a radical transformation in the thinking of most of the teacher-participants. In the clarity of Adams' presentation, they were able to grasp ideas that had eluded their understanding in isolated reading situations. While none of these teachers' projects reflected a conversion to a thoroughgoing deconstructionist posture, almost all of them reflected the influence of the decentered, questioning deconstructionist position in relation to some other, more clearly foregrounded critical approach.

In subsequent units of the institute, we explored, in greater detail, the theory and pedagogical implications of three other general critical approaches — reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and new historical criticism.

Under the direction of Steven Mailloux, the examination of reader-response criticism engaged a wide range of critical theory. Unlike deconstructionist theory, which might fairly be said to retain the New Critical focus on the text as given, reader-response theory focuses on the reader, on the act of reading as the moment the text takes on meaning; nothing has meaning except as an individual reader experiences it. The reader, not the author, creates the

text that is being experienced, for before being engaged by the reader's mind, the text is merely an arrangement of marks on paper, signs with the potential for meaning. While this sounds as if there is one reader-response criticism, there are actually several. Though all argue against the affective fallacy, the degree of subjectivity varies enormously from David Bleich and Norman Holland at one end of the spectrum to Jonathan Culler and Stanley Fish to Hans Robert Jauss at the other end of the spectrum.

Such differences actually provide many options for course design and pedagogy because the instructor can begin with the students' personal reactions and, if desired, move on to identifying literary conventions and social issues or other works that expand the meaning of the text for the student. Depending on the goals of a particular course, the teacher can use the literature as a way for students to interpret themselves as Bleich or Holland do, to see a transaction between text and reader as Louise Rosenblatt does, to work to create communities of readers who share strategies for making sense of a text as Stanley Fish and Jonathan Culler do, or to develop a cultural conversation based on Jauss's reception aesthetics. For Rosenblatt the literary work offers a special opportunity for engaging the reader in an event. While critics charge that there is a danger of losing the text to almost exclusive concentration on the students' personal views, Rosenblatt would argue that we need to help readers hold onto their *aesthetic* reading of a work — what happens while they are actually reading or "living through" the work — and not just produce *efferent* readers —who always look for the useful information to be gained from reading, such as how to take a particular medication. She urges teachers to encourage students to draw on their life experiences, which can give them the security to bring what they know to bear on the text. The teacher's role is critical in selecting works that will lead to a productive transaction and in phrasing questions so that they make clear the relationship between student experience and something in the text.

In a literature course structured around the theories of David Bleich and Norman Holland, the student's self-knowledge is the goal. For Rosenblatt, the student's knowledge and the text are the first parts of the transactive reading; however, knowledge of literary conventions, other texts, and other disciplines can deepen the aesthetic experience. Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish offer another approach, more closely aligned with the New Criticism because of its emphasis on the informed reader. Stressing the temporal nature of the reading experience, that is, reading the work closely in the sequence the author established, they focus on how the informed reader would have responded. The difference from New Criticism lies in the temporal orientation, which stresses meanings along the way, including wrong guesses that the writer leads the reader into so as to set up confusion and doubt. The teacher using this approach

is a guide helping students to see the conflicts and how they are brought about by the sequence of language and events in the work. For instance, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, close reading of the opening pages, focusing on the syntax, the word choices, the expectations set up between and within sentences helps student-readers see that problems of incomplete information and wrong guesses are the same ones the characters are having. Conrad is controlling the flow and thus the relationship of text to reader. The questions posed to students and the class discussion then move to certain key moments in the temporal flow of the story, such as Marlow's lie. Why, indeed, does Marlow lie? When students talk a great deal about this question, they penetrate deeper into the heart of interpretive darkness. They are forced to render a judgment, but the possibility of certain judgment is taken away by the temporal reading experience. The unresolved conflicts are similar to the deconstructionist's endless play, and the competencies required of the reader to be informed sound like New Critical analytical skills. They are related, but the possibilities for intense and productive reading and discussion seem to be extended by the reader involvement this approach fosters.

Steven Mailloux made it clear that all literary theories and their associated critical practices and pedagogies are "rhetorical projects," acts to persuade one to adopt a particular point of view. Stanley Fish and Jonathan Culler thus modify the more subjective position of Bleich, Holland, and Rosenblatt, at least in part to escape the anti-New Critical relativism and "impressionism" that those approaches seem to legitimate. Fish's informed reader and Culler's reading conventions are both ways of dealing with the basic question "Who has the authority to declare the meaning of the text?" The teacher's role in using this approach is to organize the students' encounters with texts so as to move them from less complex to more complex conventions. The basic heuristic is the temporal reading process — what, readers must continuously ask, does that word, phrase, line, inter-relationship of sentences *do*? Through this process, teacher-critics like Stanley Fish move students away from the individual, self-validated reading to a consensus of the class or study group, now termed an "interpretive community."

A third branch of reader-response theory leads toward the social and political considerations important to feminist and new historical theorists and critics. The "reception theory" of Hans Robert Jauss focuses on the critical and institutional response to the work of art. Jauss argues that works of art are concretized by the readings they receive at the beginning of their existence and that their history — literary history — is how that concretized reading develops over time, as succeeding generations reread, reinterpret, and respond to the work.

The pedagogical implications of Mailloux's reading of Jauss are enormous. The teacher using this approach brings in diaries and journals, book reviews, and responses by other authors or significant cultural figures at the time the work was published or at various intervals since that time. What in the New Critical dispensation was considered irrelevant — "extra-literary" — can here be seen as a way of relating the text to society, to the social and political "horizon of expectations" at particular points in time. Students can more readily discern that a literary text is not fixed or static, but is an *act*, is an aspect of felt life and historical forces as well as being about felt life and historical forces. Jauss's approach is richly suggestive for student research projects, especially for those freshman courses that combine the study of literature with the writing of a research paper.

Several of the teacher-participants in the institute adapted reader-response approaches for their own classrooms. These adaptations varied from units on particular works, such as O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, to portions of courses to whole courses taught primarily through a pedagogy derived from reader-response theory.

Feminist criticism offers still another way for students to see themselves in relation to the literature, for it is not a theory about texts but rather a stance guided by a problem outside of literature: the issue of gender definition. In the study of literature the absence of women — in the texts and the authors studied — and the hostility toward women in much of the literature and classroom practice led, initially, to the development of separate women's studies programs. According to the institute's feminist critic Myra Jehlen, this step was necessary to establish a constituency, to get works by women writers back into print, and to identify what women are saying, as Elaine Showalter and Susan Gilbert have done in exploring "the presence which has been ignored."

Recently, the trend has been increasingly to incorporate works by women writers into core courses and to use a comparative mode: looking at men's and women's writing and how they write. Second, new historical and feminist approaches align themselves with poststructuralism in that they decenter and attack the notion of "an authority." The feminist stance looks at the way literature deals with problems in the culture, such as the Emersonian model of the autonomous individual, which need to be universal to function. Feminists have called into question the nominal genderlessness of the universal subject, which is, in fact, the white, middle-class male. Furthermore, the Emersonian model focuses on interiority and ignores the constraints of the external world. Feminist writers argue that experience is always the interaction of parts, internal and external, a continual flux of identity.

As Myra Jehlen demonstrated to the institute participants, the goal of feminist pedagogy in the teaching of literature is not to look for issues or works that force issues, but to identify what is present in the text — and to discuss what is absent. From the feminist perspective, gender issues are not "extra-literary," not dropped in or forced on a text. Gender structures are part of the world view of all writers and all readers. Feminist criticism is the process of paying attention to the problem of the representation of women and the representation of men. Feminist pedagogy works to "thicken the text" by raising cultural assumptions to the surface and allowing students to become (or, better, remain) "interested" readers, rather than striving to become the "disinterested" reader of New Critical aestheticism.

As might be expected, teacher-participant response to feminist pedagogy was varied and enthusiastic. Projects ranged from detailed plans for teaching single works to units on women writers in long-standing courses to entirely new approaches to survey courses.

During the final week of the institute Brook Thomas led the participants in an exploration of the new historical criticism. Using as touchstones thinkers like Walter Benjamin, E. P. Thompson, and Michel Foucault, as well as Marxist critics like Williams and Jameson, Thomas relocated the work of literature inside the constraints of historical systems, not outside it, as was the tendency of New Criticism. Within the endless play of dominations, as Foucault sees the social system, all discursive practices are relevant. In order to cause texts to yield their unspoken (or repressed) subjects, it is necessary, as Walter Benjamin has said, "to brush history against the grain." Doing so allows the reader to become aware of the cultural pressures and constraints operating on characters — and on authors.

Pedagogically, the new historical teacher seeks, in Brook Thomas's phrase, to "always historicize." To do this, the new historical approach seeks to adapt all other relevant methodologies for reading the text and teaching it. Historicizing the text does not displace close reading or reader-response temporal reading, but supplements it. Historicizing a text such as Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, for example, would develop a critique of Willy Loman as an image of his historical moment, constrained by the particulars of social possibility and expectation as well as by personality and family. Further, it is clearly relevant to study the work at many points in its historic existence, not only at its moment of conception or production. Here the new historical criticism connects to reception theory, a component of reader-response theory. Like feminist approaches, the new historical stance does not add issues that the text does not suggest but rather helps the student expand his or her capacity to see the scope of the issues raised.

Prospects for historicizing the text appealed to a large number of the teacher-participants. Among the plans submitted that incorporated new historical approaches were extensive units on Dickens novels and Ibsen plays, as well as whole courses, one, at least, designed to be team-taught with an economist.

Armed with sophisticated new skills for reading and presenting literature, the participants also confronted the issue of the canon. If we make room for new works by women and minority writers to help in brushing history against the grain, what should be discarded or diminished? If we make time for the analysis of the temporal reading process in class, which works will be most effective in developing these skills? What if the works we know best, like best, or think the most of, turn out to be poor choices for our new purposes? The projects submitted suggest that these serious questions have not been swept under office rugs but are being pondered, tinkered with, and discussed.

The discussion continues. Early in the institute, Hazard Adams introduced the indispensible poststructuralist term "discourse." This was followed by Steven Mailloux's concept of "cultural conversation," and Myra Jehlen's similar notion of culture as a dinner party. During the final week, Brook Thomas capped this series of terms, analogies, and metaphors when he said, "Understanding is an endless dialogue with the text. You, who've read it fifty times, are still having a dialogue; new history can enhance the dialogue."

Enhancing the dialogue, helping students find meaning in literature, is a goal most teachers of literature courses, especially introductory ones, would espouse without question. But can we achieve this without constant change and growth in our own reading? Is it not essential to seek all possible means for aiding the student in participating in the dialogue, the cultural conversation, the dinner party of reading? In discussing new critical approaches, we have risked over-simplification and obfuscation to suggest some possibilities these approaches hold for revitalizing the teacher's own reading and pedagogy, and for changing the way courses are structured, what is read, and how it can be taught in ways that will benefit students.

Notes

[1] See both the 1982-83 and 1983-84 "Writing and Literature Survey: Courses and Programs," in the *ADE Bulletin*, vol. 76 (Winter 1983) and vol. 79 (Winter 1984).

[2] James J. Kinney, "Scientism and the Teaching of English," *New Students in Two-Year Colleges*, ed Walker Gibson (NCTE, 1979), pp. 28-29.

Toward a Bibliographic Guide to Teaching the Principles of Management Through Humanities

Donald W. Ellis and Francis Michael Stackenwalt

POPULAR WISDOM HOLDS that management is the most humanistic discipline remaining in the general business curriculum. A few decades back, economics could also lay claim to a humanist tradition, particularly those specializations influenced by the German historical school, of which Werner Sombart is perhaps the most familiar representative to American students. But the pronounced mathematical and econometric bent that has come to dominate economic research since then has greatly undermined the legitimacy of that older humanist tradition. No other business discipline makes the slightest pretension to exhibit the values and purposes of a humanistic education; and unfortunately for management, that popular wisdom expresses more a desire than reality. The authors of one undergraduate text tell students that "human behavior, human decisions, human relations, and human dreams are at the core [of the managing process]. The principles of management are not impersonal abstractions from economics, mathematics, mechanics, or geometry. Rather, we can hope to comprehend management only by understanding people."[1] Although that statement easily suggests the liberal arts as the proper instruction for gaining insights into the human condition, the textbook derives its hypotheses about human behavior from psychology and not *humanitas*. Human dignity, the central concept of a humanistic education, is subordinated to the notions of expectancy and equity theories, which to us tend to be couched in an arcane, behavioralist jargon that masquerades as exact science but conveys little of a humanistic ethos.

This essay proposes a way to reconcile management education with the humanities. It hopes to provide an essentially different and a more profound and meaningful study of management than typically offered in many colleges of business administration. Management study for the most part conceives human nature in simplistic terms and, consequently, anticipates quite limited behavioral responses to a very broad and complex range of contingent events. This paper suggests a way to surmount that deficiency. Our methodology uses a standard

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management principles textbook[2] for its organizational taxonomy. Because of spatial limitations for the paper, we chose three of the most important sections for management education, which in our view are also the three least thought-out sections. The management subject matter is briefly summarized, and humanities selections correlated with the information. A very succinct statement on the significance of the humanities readings to management theory and practice is provided in order to allay any doubts about relevance.

Our nineteenth- and twentieth-century slant appears for two reasons. First, the authors' educational backgrounds and professional interests lie in modern European history: one in twentieth-century German intellectual and cultural history and the other in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian economic history. Second, and more important, the humanities readings selected reflect, in the authors' opinions, the response of humanists to the milieu created by the scientific and industrial revolutions and their further elaboration. Since management students eventually must enter the world of affairs where traditional management training still rules, this approach offers customary management instruction augmented by the ideas of modern humanists on topics set in environments not so far removed from those of today.

Management Epistemology

THE CENTRAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL problem concerning the certainty of our knowledge is posed very briefly, and somewhat vaguely, in the opening pages of the textbook. Students are cautioned that management principles are not to be taken as universally valid scientific laws but as guides to action for managers that are subject to change and interpretation. Nevertheless, students are then told that certain notions about human behavior have been empirically verified and that they should resist the natural tendency to rely on intuition rather than scientific investigation for reaching conclusions. Management is represented, then, as having discovered a set of general statements about humanity that, while not apodeictically certain, contain such truth as to predict behavioral responses to environmental stimuli with great accuracy. Skepticism about generally accepted theoretical premises and universal statements are brushed aside as intuitive whims. The humanities readings in this section should challenge the student to reconsider more thoughtfully any claims of epistemological certitude made by an academic discipline about its knowledge. It is intended that such reconsiderations will put management education on a surer footing for students.

Cartesian rationality offers an interesting test of management's purported scientific basis. René Descartes' conviction (*Discourse on Method*) that the method of mathematical reasoning is the lone path to certainty resides at the heart of much modern education. The acquisition of knowledge for Descartes

begins with an act of doubting, that is, from a refusal to accept any principle as necessarily true. Nothing but a clear and distinct, or self-evident, intuition, which is independent of any other intuition, can lead to certainty. That irrefutable first truth is his *cogito*. Knowledge of our world, then, resides in us in an innate, or *a priori*, idea. From that first principle, Descartes uses a deductive thought process, "chains of reasoning" in his words, that ends with an absolute demonstration of truth. The rules of his deduction are those of mathematical proof: (1) begin with a fundamental truth than cannot be doubted, (2) then divide the demonstration into its components, (3) solve the problem in an orderly fashion from the simplest statements to the more complex, (4) enumerate the proof so completely that no omissions occur. As the textbook intimates, though ambiguously, management principles cannot be derived with such mathematical certitude. Thus, management generalizations about human behavior seem more akin to the probabilistic knowledge of historical research than the demonstrations of algebra and the exact sciences. Descartes' theory of knowledge ought to raise students' suspicions about any axiomatic claims made by a particular management principle. The divergence of opinion by management specialists and the waxing and waning of trends on almost any topic surely must indicate the futility of establishing the existence of *a priori* ideas about human behavior.

David Hume *(An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding)* confronts the student bluntly with the skeptical arguments of British empiricism about the limits of any knowledge derived from sensory data. Hume's notions on cause and effect relationships on matters of fact are especially significant for an epistemological investigation of management principles. A singular incontestable truth, if we may be permitted a bit of facetious transformational criticism, proceeds from a reading of Hume: no one can ever again doubt the uncertainty attached to a study of human behavior. Hume's contribution to management, therefore, is found in his lucid distinctions between demonstrative knowledge and probabilistic knowledge. Hume writes that all ideas, or weak perceptions, are formed from sense impressions, or strong perceptions. For Hume, we only know what nature tells us through our senses. Knowledge, then, is nothing more than seeing, touching, hearing, smelling. Hume is concerned with the way we interpret sense data, in particular, with the way we construct cause and effect associations among ideas. So, for example, a watch found on a desert island, says Hume, leads us to infer that a human being had been there previously. We have, then, certain expectations of uniformity arising from repetitious experiences; in other words, like effects, we believe, always arise from like causes in a seemingly necessary relationship. However, we are told that this mental relationship is an invention of our imaginations and is, in Hume's words, entirely arbitrary. Even Descartes' method of mathematical reasoning provides no help in establishing necessity in the causal relationship. Algebra and geometry reveal

relationships about abstract ideas that are independent of anything existing in the everyday world of experience. As Hume notes, three times five equal fifteen only because our minds make it so and not because it relates to something existent. In short, Hume sees no necessary self-evident connection between cause and effect. By custom, which means the expectation of similar events in sequence, we anticipate similarities in causal relationships. The mind considers possible outcomes from an event and selects that effect which has cropped up most often. Therefore, Hume allows only probabilistic knowledge and gives us good advice: never overlook other probable consequences.

Immanuel Kant *(Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics)* attempts to break out of what he believes to be the epistemological *cul-de-sac* created by the extreme rationalism and skepticism of Descartes and Hume. In doing so, Kant acts as another useful guide for thinking about the way and extent management principles have validity for describing human behavior. Kant will again allow mind a central role in the acquisition of knowledge, but not to the extent of Descartes' innate ideas. It is mind, through pure *a priori* categories, and mind alone that interprets the world and gives us knowledge. But this is knowledge only of phenomena, or things that appear to us by sensory impressions (Kantian *a posteriori* intuitions) and not of things as they are in themselves. Thus Kant gives us our modern world of epistemology.

Mathematics revealed to Kant that an apodeictic certitude, which did not rest on an empirical foundation, was possible. His purpose was to refute Hume's contention that the mind was only capable of associating different ideas in some probabilistic relationship rooted in custom. For Kant, the acquisition of knowledge begins with an *a priori* synthetical intuition, a mental act that organizes sense perceptions into the consciousness. This *a priori* structuring of data, which makes that data intelligible, precedes all sensory intuition. It is, then, a mental operation that is independent of all experience. While an *a priori* synthetical intuition requires a sense perception, in a concrete use, says Kant, to make that intuition meaningful, it is still the mind in an *a priori* cognition that imparts knowledge about sense data. However, that knowledge of the sensory object is only about phenomenon, or appearance, and not of the object-in-itself. By allowing for an objective reality, Kant escaped falling into a metaphysical solipsism that Descartes was hard pressed to avoid. He was sure that understanding how sense perception and mind interact would guard against false judgments and illusions. In addition, he returned to the mind the creative, organizing, and synthesizing qualities, his twelve concepts of the understanding and the *a priori* forms of space and time, that Hume denied it. Since it is the mind that must make sense of the phenomena with which management must deal, Kant restores the student's confidence that management knowledge can be gained.

With Edward Husserl *(Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy)*, we arrive in the twentieth century. Husserl has had a notable influence on psychology, helping it to firm its epistemological structure, and should therefore prove useful for business students. In "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science," Husserl asserts that all science is imperfect, since its knowledge remains incomplete and plagued by theoretical defects. Psychology in particular he thought naive because it had yet to develop an epistemology. It required a theory of knowledge that related consciousness to nature. For psychology to be truly knowledgeable, it must understand what consciousness means and how it perceives its objects. The methods of science, he wrote, must embrace the mysteries of the mind. This, then, was the purpose of his phenomenology. A phenomenological method would yield improved knowledge of human mental activity and more refined concepts of perception, imagination, expectation, recognition, and the like. The latter improvement alone would expand the range of questions psychology could ask and expand the answers it could obtain. No academic discipline could hope for more.

The final section of *Phenomenology*, "The Crisis of European Man," is a useful summation to a semester's work in management. The humanist and the social scientist, when studying the human mind, must not forget that mind acts in a specific, in Husserl's words, "environing world." That world has an entelechy that regulates and controls activity and provides order; entelechy causes mind to think in definite patterns. It is not something biological or physical but spiritual. Europe, for example, is an idea, whose birthplace was seventh- and sixth-century Attic Greece. The idea, says Husserl, is knowledge for the sake of knowledge. While the goal of knowledge is completely divorced from practical applications, knowledge *qua* knowledge unites with the practical to form a synthesis of theory and practice. Thus is created a new outlook that provides a universal critique of all life forging new norms of truth. The question to ourselves is whether we have done that for our management students or whether we have given them only jargon.

Social Responsibility and Ethics

CHAPTERS ON SOCIAL responsibility and ethics in the textbooks surveyed tended to be brief and in some instances muddled. In a few, the topic appears at the beginning, apparently not so much for endorsing its importance but for disposing of an irksome subject quickly. In others, ethical discussions fall at the very end like some kind of tidying-up operation. Our textbook choice does treat the topic more dutifully than most but also like most has trouble conveying the precise relationship between social responsibility and ethics. Social responsibility is defined as the way individuals and corporations deal with current social issues; ethics is described as a set of principles governing human action.[3] No

attempt at establishing a connection between the two is made, especially the vital notion that conceptions about obligations and responsibilities to humanity and the natural world are built upon ethical considerations. Perhaps even less excusable, no indication reveals itself that essential disagreements may exist over both the underpinnings and content of Western ethical standards. In fact, an inarguable Judeo-Christian ethic is presupposed an effective guide that has already become a necessary component of personnel policy and corporate laissez-faire doctrine. As such, the staff is said to be happier when rules of corporate conduct are codified according to this generally accepted ethic, thus merging together corporate and personal standards. In a more apprehensive mood, the absence of a corporate code is said to invite the imposition of one by society through governmental intervention. Attention to ethical concerns in this instance seems geared toward public opinion and fears for corporate independence. Little room is allowed in such presentations for real ethical speculation. Another text, more attuned to the effects of a consensus morality contrived only to ward off state intervention, suggests that ethical cynicism may be a foregone conclusion from a managerial temperament that depends on others to form ethical judgments.[4] Finally, we hope that students will not equate textbook exercises in social responsibility with exercises in corporate image-making.

Friedrich Nietzsche *(Beyond Good and Evil)* collides head-on with ethical cynicism. Nietzsche states that nothing can be more beautiful than searching for one's own virtues. He calls for a reconsideration of values that begins with a systematical dismantling of the religious foundations of ethics. By clearing the site of a dilapidated moral structure, one which had no efficacy in the first place, new values, inspired by the nobility of the human spirit and of life for the sake of life itself, could be constructed. Western ethical traditions, writes Nietzsche, have produced nothing but the suppression of individual moral responsibility. What is labeled good and just is only that which is useful to the community; what is evil becomes anything which endangers the survival of that community. For Nietzsche, such a consensus attitude is the mark of a herd mentality. It reveals not a love of our fellow human beings but a fear of them. We are afraid of creativity, foolhardiness, an enterprising spirit, and of strong egotistical drives like vengefulness and lust for power. Such emotions, thought Nietzsche, were the very traits of mankind that brought us the marvels of ancient Greece and Rome. Human nature has since been throttled by a slave morality. Now, nobility and self-reliance are mistrusted, and timidity and mediocrity reign. Nietzsche hurls a challenge to the student to reconsider and reflect upon all ethical precepts handed down from society. The call is admittedly harsh and perhaps nihilistic, but Nietzsche himself realized that firm ethical values could weather the test, and rethought ones would be firmer for that reason. Thus the manager

must be more than a linking-pin and has a duty to him- or herself and to others to question and to rethink codes of conduct, but such an obligation implies a solid education in the humanities.

In John Stuart Mill *(Utilitarianism)*, the student discovers the origins of our popularized twentieth-century middle-class ethical assumptions and the source of Nietzsche's rage. Nonetheless, everyday consensus ethics are not the same as the greatest-happiness principle of Mill's utility theory. Utility for Mill was pleasure and the exemption of pain, but it was not momentary, frivolous indulgence in sentient diversions. Instead, pleasure referred to the intellect, compassion, imagination, and moral sentiments. Humankind's sense of dignity separated human pleasure from inferior animal enjoyments of the body. Humans, thought Mill, definitely know the difference between the two types and know where real contentment lies. The hierarchical ordering of pleasures is evident in the paradox that forgoing happiness in service to humanity or a noble ideal offers the sole prospect of achieving happiness. "It is better to be a Socrates satisfied," writes Mill, "than a fool satisfied." The sanction for utility is a belief that we have a duty to humankind which springs from our social nature. This belief is the essence of conscience, and to violate it means remorse. Thus, says Mill, the utilitarian principle demands a love and a cultivation of virtue and service to humanity.

Mill's restatement of Jeremy Bentham's utility has since become a focus of much criticism in moral philosophy. Like Nietzsche, Gaetano Mosca *(Ruling Class)* found utilitarianism extremely repugnant. Mosca calls the utility principle the maneuver of a hypocrite. Goodness may come about unconsciously by virtue of simplicity of character or from consciously developing a magnanimity of purpose. However, Mosca is certain that acting ethically could never flow from a belief that by being good one could more easily realize one's aims. A twentieth-century critic of Mill, Bertrand Russell *(Human Society in Ethics and Politics)*, advances an ethical theory founded upon a principle called the subjectivity of values. Russell maintains that if two individuals disagree about values, then no disagreement in fact exists but only a difference of taste. This is so even to the extent that one person's virtue is another's vice. He thus thinks it is impossible to find the intrinsic worth underlying any value judgment. In short, some ethical codes are better than others in the same way that some consciences are better than others. There must be some criterion other than conscience to decide what is ethical conduct and what Western ethical tradition presents as rules of conduct. Simple statements like "Do not steal" and "Do not kill" are also inadequate, because no general agreement on their meanings can be found. All systems of ethics embody the desires of those who advocate them; thus, wise institutions accept that proposition and must try harmonizing desires with social purposes.

The capacity for nobler feelings is a tender plant, as Mill puts it, which quickly dies in an educational environment that does not sustain it. People lose their ethical sensibility as they lose their intellectual acuity — for lack of exercise. All of this makes it imperative that, early in the educational process, a student develop as fully as possible his or her ethical sense. A wide-ranging exposure to the humanities accomplishes that goal nicely.

Decision-Making

THE TEXTBOOK STRESSES that decision-making lies at the heart of the managerial function and demonstrates that decisions are made by using either a rational or intuitive approach. The latter is compared with decision-by-hunch and dismissed as loaded with emotion and bias. It is clear that no real understanding of intuition as a legitimate apprehension of something or as the acquisition of knowledge without using reason reveals itself in the textbook presentation. It is our contention that a reading of irrationalist humanistic literature may encourage the student to be less intimidated by decision through intuition. After all, if Albert Einstein had been suspicious of his flash of insight about special relativity on that Berne trolley, we would still be stuck with Newton in an infinite, stable, and mechanical universe. Our goal, like the *fin-de-siècle* irrationalists, is to restore some balance to decision-making by permitting intuitive flashes to have a respected place beside reason.

The rational approach, notes the textbook, is not without limitations, which stem from its reliance on the concept of economic man, who possesses full knowledge of all choices, can order, weigh, and evaluate them rationally, and choose the one with highest rating.[5] However, substituting an administrative man for an economic man, a concept of Herbert Simon *(The New Science of Management Decision),* overcomes most difficulties, according to the text. The mind's capacity for formulating and solving complex problems seems dwarfed in relation to the complexity of those very problems. As the book states, the principle of bounded rationality admits to reason's limits. Therefore, the weighing of alternatives actually rests on simplified perceptions that are imbued with biases and personal values. The resulting decision, then, is not the best alternative but the one that satisfies most readily some minimal self-imposed requirements. If that is the case, then intuition surely has a part to play in decision-making.

Even Descartes *(Discourse),* the father of rationalism, posits, as we saw above, that the source of knowledge includes an intuitive grasp of clear and distinct ideas innate to the mind. Thus, intuitive and rational approaches may be no more than two aspects of the same Cartesian methodology. But while innate ideas satisfied Descartes, they did not satisfy John Locke, who rejected intuition as *a priori* mysticism. Since then, modern science has evolved with prejudices

against any undemonstrated mental phenomena. Intuitive judgments are branded pseudoscience, an influence apparent in our textbook. Modern philosophy has not been so contemptuous of intuition, drawing much inspiration from psychiatry.

Sigmund Freud *(Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex)*, again like Nietzsche, saw Western civilization's malaise as the result of the repression of the unconscious. The libido, the source of sexual excitement and love, drives humanity into action in the objective world and arouses emotions in the subjective world of mind. The libido poses as an irrational force *par excellence*, but as part of human nature it cannot be repressed without cruel consequences for the individual. On the contrary, the libido must be directed toward other purposes, "sublimation" in Freud's terminology, besides sexual gratification. The unconscious, the irrational side, becomes the font of creativity and cultural accomplishment and, by implication, an underlying wellhead of decision-making power.

No one has done better justice to philosophical speculation on intuition than Henri Bergson *(Creative Evolution)*. Intuition is not in confilict with reason, says Bergson, but works harmoniously with it to apprehend truth. Intelligence, or reason, always contains traces of intuition, and intuition always is situated within a fringe of intelligence. That fringe, though, is the cause of much misunderstanding. Confronted with a problem, the mind marshalls its logical, scientific faculties and, as Descartes said, travels from step to step toward solution, in a process called "duration." But duration does not yield truth. Truth comes only through intuitive flashes of insight, or, as Bergson writes, intuition grasps what intelligence cannot. Intuition may impart a nebulous feeling that the logical constructs of the intellect may not be appropriate or that the cause and effect nexus may not be a sufficient explanation. Intuition establishes what Bergson calls a sympathetic communication between humanity and the rest of the world, transcending what can be learned from reason.

To Vilfredo Pareto *(The Mind and Society)*, Bergson is one of the harshest critics of science. Bergson does not dislike science, and even vaunts its powers, but only on condition that science tends to its own business: to formulate truth that is useful rather than truth which is true, or vital. If Bergson seems a mild hallucinogen, then Pareto *(The Rise and Fall of Elites)* has a refreshing common-sense approach to the problem of intuition in decision-making. His parable of the bourse is a fine summation for this section, furnishing an illustration of the subtle interplay of intuition and reason. During a drop in stock market prices, a man may decide not to buy a certain security and believes himself to be governed exclusively by reason. He does not realize, says Pareto, the extent to which he is influenced by the thousand small impressions he receives about the general economic situation. If the market turns upward and he buys that same security,

he will again think he is making another rational decision. But again, he is merely under the influence of a buoyant atmosphere created by the economic upturn.

Concluding Thoughts

WE HAVE COVERED only a small portion of what we originally intended to accomplish in this paper. Nevertheless, we offer these few pages as additional proof that the humanities are an abundant coffer for enriching business education. Selecting readings to complement management topics required little effort. It was as if the choices lay like shells on a beach waiting to be taken, sorted, and placed neatly in a classificatory sequence prescribed by some management taxonomy. Distilling the ideas of our humanists into short paragraphs, without distortion or dulling their luster, became the real task. But we believe even our modest efforts reveal with clarity that the humanities impart a dimension of critical education that makes the technical training of business more meaningful. Management study could do no better for itself than to say it taught a student how to think. It is time that popular wisdom became acknowledged fact.

Notes

[1] Ross Webber *et al.*, *Management. Basic Elements of Managing Organizations*, 3rd ed. (Irwin, 1985), p. 5.

[2] Leslie Rue and Lloyd Byars, *Management Theory and Application*, 4th ed. (Irwin, 1986).

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 71.

[4] Webber *et al.*, p. 673.

[5] Rue and Byars, p. 97.

Cultural Literacy and Developmental Education at the Community College of Philadelphia

Karen Bojar

AT LAST, EDUCATORS are beginning to broaden their conception of literacy. Thanks largely to the efforts of E. D. Hirsch, we now have a definition of literacy that goes beyond the mechanics of language processing to encompass the knowledge base required for understanding particular texts — what Hirsch calls "cultural literacy." Linda Spoerl, in her "Canon, Curriculum, and Cultural Literacy,"[1] explores the implications of Hirsch's work for community college English teachers, focusing on our role as "culture-makers." Spoerl's review is primarily concerned with how our decisions (or failure to make decisions) about canon and curriculum contribute to (or erode) our common cultural heritage.

However, Hirsch's ideas have implications not covered by Spoerl nor made explicit by Hirsch, whose work focuses primarily on elementary and secondary education. Specifically, Hirsch's work has important implications for those of us who work on the remedial, or what we frequently call developmental level. As large numbers of students in many community colleges test on the remedial level or have scores a hairline above the cutoff, any pedagogical advances in developmental education have tremendous implications for all community college classes. There are even suspicions that at many community colleges the decision as to which students are remedial is largely a political one — that the institution simply decides what is the acceptable number of remedial students and adjusts its cutoff point accordingly.

Given this state of affairs, I think it is worthwhile for community college English teachers — whether they teach college-credit or remedial courses — to explore the implications of Hirsch's work for developmental education. As a teacher of remedial reading and writing at the Community College of Philadelphia for the past eleven years, I have found my students' lack of information as much of a "reading problem" as their difficulties with vocabulary or complex syntactic structures. Frequently students will figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words and unravel syntactic intricacies in a given selection, yet still find themselves unable to make sense of the material. They

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simply lack the necessary background information. My experience clearly supports Hirsch's contention that beyond the rudiments, skill in reading has little to do with abstract techniques, and everything to do with information.[2]

The narrowly technical-skills approach Hirsch deplores is most commonly found on the remedial level. Here reading teachers are most likely to use readers with little snippets of text followed by "comprehension" questions. In addition to depriving students of the myriad of contextual clues built into connected discourse, such a succession of prose snippets contributes little to the systematic development of the students' knowledge base. Furthermore, in remedial reading courses students are often encouraged to read whatever strikes their fancy —Avon romances, *The National Enquirer* — as long as it "turns them on." The proponents of the "let-them-read-junk" approach argue that such reading will develop fluency, and in a limited sense they are correct. It is possible to make a reasonable case for supplementary use of such material, but the aim of the curriculum must surely go beyond merely developing fluency.

Hirsch argues forcefully that it *does* matter what students read and calls on us to "modify the now-dominant educational principle that holds that any suitable materials of instruction can be used to teach the skills of reading and writing,"[3] a principle he labels "educational formalism." Matters are not much better in many remedial writing courses where the "let-them-write-about-anything" approach frequently reigns. Spoerl notes "that it is now possible in many freshman composition courses for students to read nothing but other freshman essays."[4] True enough, but more true in the remedial writing course.

The very separation of language instruction into discrete reading and writing courses is, I believe, particularly harmful on the remedial level. Such students are the ones most likely to have difficulty connecting skills learned and knowledge acquired in one area with gains made in another area. Fragmentation of the curriculum is the last thing they need. Hirsch has argued forcefully against the

> unfortunate segregation of the three traditional aspects of "English": reading, writing, and literature. These three domains tend now to get separated at all levels of schooling. Even in the colleges, we are beginning to separate literature and composition courses, whereas just a few decades ago literature and composition were two parts of a single course generally called Freshman English. In recent years, these two sides of the profession have been fissioning off from each other in a way that is disastrous for the authentic cultural purposes of school and college English departments.[5]

We reading and writing teachers, of course, frequently resist such compartmentalization and sometimes stubbornly persist in calling ourselves English teachers in spite of attempts to pigeonhole us as specialists of one stripe or another. At Community College of Philadelphia many of us include extensive

reading in our writing courses, and ample writing in our reading courses. We are fortunate in that the institutional structure to some extent supports our efforts: the same instructors teach both reading and writing courses and are all members of one English department. The attempt to overcome "this unfortunate segregation" is more difficult in schools where the distinctions are institutionalized in separate reading departments, writing centers, and so on. Furthermore, many graduate schools of education have a vested interest in maintaining this sorry state of affairs with their elaborate programs for certifying "reading specialists" and more recently "writing specialists." When unsound pedagogy is built into the very structure of educational institutions, it tends to persist long after having been intellectually discredited.

Clearly, if we are to have any success with those students with the most severe academic deficiencies we must break down the artificial barriers between reading, writing, and the "content" areas. If, as Hirsch says, "part of language skill is content skill,"[6] if reading with understanding involves command of information the writer simply assumes his reader to possess, then "reading" instruction must involve some systematic attempt to expand students' knowledge base. Reading the daily newspaper — let alone sophisticated college texts — requires a solid command of basic history and geography. Further, as students expand their knowledge of the world, they must have a schema for placing and storing new information.

Lacking any rudimentary historical framework, many of my students (regular as well as remedial) have no idea that the Renaissance came before the Enlightenment, or, for that matter, that the Revolutionary War came before the Civil War. Clearly, cultural literacy must include some sense of historical chronology. In addition to expanding their knowledge base, studying historical events in chronological sequence helps students develop some sense of causality. Many of my students see the world as a jumble of totally unrelated occurences. They have not been taught geography in any systematic fashion or history in any reasonable sequence. Developing some notion of historical causality can teach them that events have consequences that themselves trigger other events — a lesson with implications for their personal lives, their academic careers, and the political choices they will ultimately make.

How do those of us who teach in remedial programs help students develop this basic historical/geographical framework within the span of a few short semesters? Is it possible to give a crash course in the kind of general information accumulated gradually over twelve years of schooling? The failure to address this critical aspect of literacy adequately is surely one reason remedial programs have generally met with so little success.

At the Community College of Philadelphia, we've tried to address this problem by offering developmental "content" courses in history, geography,

and social science linked to remedial English courses and by starting to develop a dictionary of basic historical/geographical information to be used as a core element of the curriculum in each of the developmental content courses. Such efforts, perforce, proceed slowly. How do faculty members with diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and values agree on what constitutes this "core" of basic information? How does one avoid presenting students with a superficial smorgasbord of historical/geographical tidbits? How does one avoid a rigid, lock-step curriculum?

Hirsch addresses these concerns with his very useful distinction between what he calls the "extensive" and "intensive" curriculum, a distinction particularly helpful to the remedial English teacher faced with the problem of presenting a crash course in "cultural literacy." He defines the "extensive" curriculum as "broad, but superficial. It is often learned by rote. It is mainly enumerative. It consists of atomic facts and categories. It does not put things together."[7] Although vague and superficial, the information covered in the extensive curriculum is nonetheless critically important. To cite Hirsch's examples, the reader need not know very much about DNA or the first amendment to understand articles on these subjects addressed to the general reader. However, if he knows nothing about these subjects, he's going to have a "reading problem."

In contrast to the discrete, superficial character of the information contained in the extensive curriculum, "understanding how to put things together"[8] is the contribution of the "intensive" curriculum. Hirsch argues that

> intensive study is the most flexible part of the curriculum. For building mental models, it doesn't greatly matter whether the Shakespeare play read in ninth grade is *Macbeth* or *Julius Caesar*. What does matter is whether our idea of Shakespeare is formed on an actual, concrete experience of a Shakespearian play. Such intensive learning is necessary, because the mental model we get from detailed study of an example lets us connect our atomic facts together and build a coherent picture of reality. On the other hand, since the chief function of intensive study is to get examples for such models, our choice of examples can vary with circumstances, and should depend on students' knowledge and interest.[9]

Hirsch sees the intensive curriculum as flexible and varied but cautions that "there is a limit to the flexibility of the intensive curriculum. A play by Neil Simon or George Chapman is no effective substitute for a play by Shakespeare."[10]

Now what does all this have to do with the teacher in a remedial reading course? Conventional wisdom would have it that the instructor must search for materials on the students' reading level. Aesthetic merit, philosophical seriousness, historical significance are irrelevant — what counts is "readability." Fortunately, the practice of determining readability by counting the number of

syllables per word and words per sentence has been generally discredited — at least by those who write about such things. Clearly, readability involves such factors as syntactic complexity, organizational clarity, prior knowledge, and reader interest and motivation — factors not easily incorporated into any readability formula.

However, the fundamental flaw in many reading specialists' approach to "readability" is to see it as something fixed, inherent in a text, rather than a variable that teachers can to a large degree control. When readability is thus viewed as a variable, all sorts of possibilities for the "intensive" curriculum open up. For example, if I provide my students with an organizational overview and relevant background information, combined with considerable in-class reading, they are able to work their way through serious literary materials deemed hopelessly above their "reading level." In a college-level class I would, of course, provide much less extensive support; further, students would be expected to do assigned readings at home and come to class prepared to discuss them. Remedial and college-level courses need not differ in the quality of reading materials, but rather in the degree of teacher guidance, the amount of material covered, and the level of teacher expectations.

Such an approach allows the teacher of remedial English to incorporate some of those literary works that are central to our cultural heritage. Hirsch distinguishes between the "central content of cultural literacy" and the "periphery" — the former relatively stable, the latter ever-changing. This distinction is particularly useful in determining the content of the extensive curriculum. Hirsch contends that "these days, writers can assume their readers know who Gerald Ford is, but thirty years from now they probably won't make that assumption. On the other hand, thirty years from now writers will continue to assume [their readers have heard the tale] that George Washington could not tell a lie, and that Scrooge hated Christmas."[11]

Hirsch argues that although the kinds of information writers assume the ordinary reader to possess changes yearly — perhaps even daily — a stable core of information remains relatively constant over long periods of time. He argues against the notion that our common experiences of television provide us with a sufficient amount of shared knowledge: "the shelf-life of our T.V. memory is brief. A writer cannot dependably use an allusion to Starsky and Hutch. Most T.V. culture exists at the unstable periphery of the national culture, not at its stable center."[12] Yet heavy reliance on what Hirsch calls the "unstable periphery" is more likely to be found in remedial courses than in college-level ones. Frequently, the rationale for such curricular choices is that remedial students must concentrate on language skills before tackling intellectually demanding material. Nontaxing material that appeals directly to students' immediate interests is often seen as the best vehicle for remedial reading/writing

instruction. At some future point when language skills have been mastered, students will deal with significant content.

The underlying assumption is that language skills are in some fundamental sense distinct from general knowledge. The problem of course is that students must expand their knowledge base, must build their cultural literacy *before* they can hope to handle a wide range of college-level texts independently. Students are frequently in remedial programs because they lack the knowledge base necessary to handle college-level material, and sadly they often wind up getting more of the same empty "skills" instruction that helped to land them in remedial programs in the first place. The dismal cycle continues.

Such students will never go beyond low-level literacy unless they receive sustained exposure to what Hirsch calls the "central content of cultural literacy." (Not that such exposure is sufficient to solve the problem, but it's certainly a necessary condition.) In a real sense for the teacher of remedial English, the intensive curriculum is the easy part. As Hirsch says, "What we have chiefly neglected is the extensive part of the curriculum, the part that is crucial to shared knowledge and literacy. Although we must gain intensive knowledge to make coherent sense out of facts, we must also gain a store of particular, widely shared background facts in order to make sense of what we read."[13]

But how do we help our students develop this shared background knowledge in a relatively short span of time? This brings us right back to the time constraints that pose such a stumbling block for the adult student in the one- or two-semester remedial program. Within the time limits, I believe it is possible to present a rudimentary historical/geographical framework, then try to provide students with the tools and motivation to continue to add to their store of knowledge. But how to convince them of the importance of the task? I have had some success by having students analyze the kind of background information the writer of a newspaper article assumes the ordinary reader to have. For example, *after* providing students with a historical overview of a current events issue — *e.g.*, the situation in Poland — I ask them to analyze the kinds of background information assumed in an article describing a specific event directly related to the larger issue — *e.g.*, an article on the trial of the murderers of Father Popieluszka. Then we try to determine the kinds of misunderstandings that might occur if readers lacked *any* rudimentary knowledge of the role of the Catholic Church in Poland, the political system in Poland, the recent role of Solidarity, the historical relationship of Poland to the Soviet Union, and the geographical position of Poland. The trick is, of course, to provide students with some appreciation of the problem, without overwhelming them with its enormity. And in the case of so many students in remedial programs, the problem is indeed enormous.

I've found teachers, no doubt because of their deeper understanding of the immensity of the task, more overwhelmed than students by the seeming impossibility of building a respectable knowledge base within so short a period of time. But ignoring the problem — ignoring the all-important cultural component in what we call literacy — only ensures that remedial students will never become independent readers of college-level materials or, for that matter, independent readers of the daily newspaper.

Notes

[1] *Community College Humanities Review* (Winter 1984-85), pp. 87-104.

[2] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., "Cultural Literacy and the Curriculum," keynote adress to the Annual Statewide Staff Development Conference, California State Department of Education, Asilomar, Calif., January 22-24, 1985. The ideas on curriculum contained in this address were not yet in published form and may not have been known to Spoerl when she reviewed Hirsch's work. A revised version of Hirsch's address was later published as "Cultural Literacy and the Schools," *American Educator*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer 1985), pp. 8-15.

[3] Hirsch, "Cultural Literacy," *The American Scholar* (Spring 1983), p. 161.

[4] Spoerl, p. 91.

[5] Hirsch, " 'English' and the Perils of Formalism," *The American Scholar* (Summer 1984), p. 376.

[6] Hirsch, "Cultural Literacy," p. 164.

[7] Hirsch, "Cultural Literacy and the Curriculum."

[8] *Ibid.*

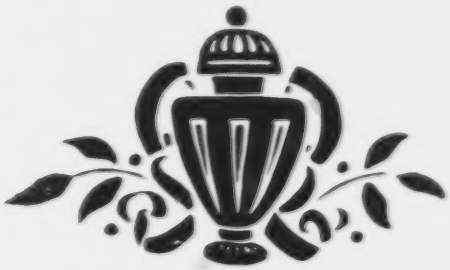
[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.*



Europe in the Fast Lane, America Through a Telescope

Skip Lowery

IT WAS MY THIRD semester in the Humanities Department, and I still felt inadequate, uncomfortable, paranoid. I was that renegade borrowed from English comp. to fill a temporary vacancy because it was easier than hiring someone from outside the college. Why did I accept? Because I needed a break from grading freshman papers and wanted to try something different, something with more "content," even though at the time I hadn't the foggiest notion of what humanities was supposed to be. I had some background in world lit. and a natural interest in classical music, but I soon realized, as most Americans would in similar circumstances, that I knew little about the history of European civilization, especially its art, which turned out to be a large part of what the department defined as humanities.

I worked hard the first year, but I still thought I was cheating the students. How could I convince them of the wonders of European civilization when I had never seen any of it firsthand. I had never been to Europe! That, I decided, was my problem. Everybody else in the department had been to Europe. I was like the eighteenth-century English gentleman ostracized because he had never taken the grand tour of the Continent. Either I would slink back into the security of the English Department or go to Europe myself. I went to Europe.

Since I couldn't afford to study there on my own, and the college was not about to send me, I did what many poor instructors who want to go to Europe do: recruited enough students for a summer tour so I could go along free as an adviser. I would see five countries in four and a half weeks — culture in the fast lane.

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Before last summer I had convinced myself and several students that the European grand tour was a necessity for anyone completing a liberal arts curriculum, or for any member of the community simply hungry for capital C Culture. Now that I'm back, I ask myself if I still feel that way. Has the trek from Athens to London, the visits to the famous museums and monuments of Europe and Great Britain been worth it? There is an obvious yes answer to that question. Any major journey educates and changes us in many ways we may not be aware of; the college summer tour is no exception. But I'm convinced now that few of the lessons learned have to do with traditional notions of culture. For example, I no longer believe it is worth traveling to Europe to see great works of art, at least for people who don't know a lot about art already. That statement would have sounded absurd fifty years ago, but fifty years ago people did not have access to color prints, 35-mm slides, and videotape machines. In the nineteenth century, one *had* to take the grand tour to see the genius of a Titian or a Raphael. Today I believe a teacher with a tray of good quality slides can do more to awaken interest in art history than can a guided tour of, say, the Louvre, where original works are hanging.

Why do I say that? Because in the first place what we do not experience sitting in the relative comfort of a classroom is the capital C Chaos of a museum. In the summer, every major European museum is crowded and noisy. One guide will often fight with another over which group will be first; when the guide settles us in front of a painting, he or she has to shout over our heads information about the intricacies and delicacies of the great masterpiece. Worse, most tour members are already exhausted. Studying pictures in books is one thing; there we can choose what pictures we enjoy, and decide when and how long we want to look at them. On the summer tour, time is precious, so we are paraded around through the crowds at subway speed, given a glance at the works the guide has chosen for us to see, and then shuffled back out again to the waiting bus. Chances are we will have already been on a city tour that morning, or in a train all night, or up late having fun. Our feet swell; our backs hurt; our nervous systems overload. Walking up and down marble stairs and straining to keep up with the guide seem more like an endurance test than a cultural experience. By the end of the visit, half the troop has abandoned the tour literally or mentally; some have gotten lost looking for the toilet and must be searched for later. That's why I decided to go by myself to the Louvre, to give art one more chance. But after an initial thrill over the Davids and Delacroixs in the main gallery, my nervous system went into shock again. The sheer number of canvases, hall after hall of them, and so little time! I made the same mistake so many inexperienced visitors make: tried to see everything. As a result I saw nothing.

Of course I could have anticipated such a reaction if I had read Andre Malraux's *Museum Without Walls* before I left. Most paintings, Malraux

reminds us, were not meant to be seen in museums at all. They were more often commissioned by private patrons for the relative isolation of a salon or study. Museums have existed in the West for barely 200 years, and have forced us to look at art in a different way. "They have tended to estrange the works they bring together from their original functions and to transform even portraits into 'pictures'." Non-Western cultures, by contrast, have little use for museums. The Japanese, for example, unroll a valued painting on special occasions or for honored guests only; viewing the work is considered something of a sacred privilege.

Another book I should have read was Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*. Twain went on his own grand tour in 1867, by steamship. When everyone else oohed and ahed over famous art collections, Twain wrote: "If, up to this time, I had seen only one 'old master' in each palace, instead of acres and acres of walls and ceilings fairly papered with them, might I not have a more civilized opinion of the old masters than I now have?" In Rome he particularly admired an isolated *Transfiguration* by Raphael because "it was out of the crazy chaos of the galleries."

An artist friend of mine suggests that those in charge of the world's art collections rearrange their concept of the museum. Break the big galleries into small rooms where only one or two paintings are displayed. Provide comfortable chairs. The extra space needed for partitions could come from a more careful editing of the collection. But this is all hindsight. That morning in the Louvre I was feeling frustrated and guilty. Strange how this admission affected me. With the burden of culture off my shoulders, I was able to relax and enjoy my visit. For fun I decided to ignore art and watch people, specifically how people looked at paintings. I wandered into the room of the Louvre's superstar, Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*. By this time the crowds had gathered, and several tour groups, as usual, were vying for position in front of the glass case where the famous portrait was exhibited. How curious a spectacle they were. Some toward the rear could not wait for a better opportunity to view the painting (after all, time is limited), so they held cameras above their heads, aimed blindly, and *took a flash picture!* Forgetting for a moment that flash photos are prohibited in museums, what they took a picture of could only be the reflection of the flash, and perhaps some people in the foreground, in the glass case. But for them it was enough proof that they had seen it, a record of their pilgrimage to the shrine of Big C Culture. They needn't bother to know anything more or look carefully at the painting itself (much better Leonardos are hanging nearby, I note). People wanted a picture because the *Mona Lisa* is *famous*.

I went to the Jeu des Paumes to continue my observations and in the meantime try to see, without expecting to enjoy, a few works from my favorite period of French art, nineteenth-century impressionism and postimpressionism.

This time I would not try to look at everything. For a few seconds, because it was early and I was rested, Monet's magic transported me. It was one of the water lily series, and I realized then why reproductions in books would never substitute for the poetry of his canvas. But then a small group gathered between me and the painting and I moved on to the Van Goghs. Even more than Monet, Van Gogh must be experienced in the "flesh" for the intensity of color, the passion of the brush stroke, et cetera. Yet I knew there were Monets and Van Goghs in the Metropolitan and the National Gallery. Those Americans expert enough to notice the subtleties of original color and brush strokes should go to New York or Washington and avoid the expense of Europe.

I found a seat in a hall where several Cezanne still lifes were hanging. I did not have a stopwatch, but I tried tracking the amount of time most people spent looking at a single canvas. I chose one of the most representative of Cezanne's works, one of those with a basket of fruit and other objects in which he had begun adding another dimension to visual experience and thus paved the way for cubism. Now, the average viewer spent five seconds "looking," but the first three seconds were taken up in identifying the artist. Then the viewer glanced at the work for two seconds before moving on.

Before I left I stopped at the museum's bookstore. I remembered that one of the women on our tour wanted me to buy her a volume with reproductions of the museum's collection because, as she said, "I have to go shopping and can't get there." My head was still spinning over the implications of her statement when I saw the crowd surrounding the counters where slides and posters were for sale. Some of the same people who barely glanced at the original Cezanne still life *were now buying a picture of it!* The photograph has become a reality, an imitation of an imitation of an imitation. We are deeper in the cave than I had imagined. But at least this substantiated what I said earlier. We don't need museums, not if this is the way most people look at art. At best, museums seem to act as stimuli for those who, having "seen" the original works, will now take time in the leisure of their homes to study the reproductions more carefully. But that is the ideal. More than likely the posters and cards will get filed away in scrapbooks or put on shelves and forgotten, shown only to impress friends and relatives with evidence of culture collected on the grand tour.

So far I've been talking about the way museums dull our appreciation of great paintings. The same can be said about sculpture. In Florence, for example, one searches for Verrochio's *Mercury* and Michelangelo's *Bacchus* or Donatello's *St. George* among a chessboard of lesser known works. They and their counterparts in the National Museum in Athens, especially the Parthenon marbles in the British Museum, seem lifeless in the artificial atmosphere of a gallery. These works were meant to adorn temples, gardens, and squares where sunlight can play over their surfaces. Museums turn them into wax. There are

exceptions, of course, such as the Rodin museum in Paris or Michelangelo's *David* under the cupola of the Academia. But like Mark Twain's experience with Raphael's *Transfiguration*, my most moving contact with sculpture happened away from a traditional museum, in the small church of Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome, where I was left alone to enjoy a supreme work of genius, Bernini's *Santa Teresa in Ecstasy*, in the setting for which it was created.

Well then, if its art treasures aren't worth the trip, what does Europe offer the pilgrim in search of culture: Music? Theater? Fashionable dining? Yes, all of these things, but we have them in the United States as well, and without the language barriers, the condensed time, and the greater expense. What else? In the broadest meaning of the term, I would say architecture. In this I agree with Kenneth Clark, who agreed with John Ruskin, that we can learn more of the history of a culture from a building than we can from deeds or records or public speeches. And I am not only talking about single structures but about streets, villages, cities — environments that cannot be put into museums or experienced from a photograph.

For example, I don't believe we can comprehend fully what the humanities textbooks say about the Gothic world until we have walked into a Chartres or Notre Dame. Even the youngest members of our tour stand silently at the entrance to the nave, open-mouthed at the awesome dimensions of the cathedral interior. Religious or not, they feel something spiritual here. Architecture has made visible for them the medieval idea of God as space — upward, vast emptiness — and mysterious light, diffused through the stained glass of the clerestory. They understand the extent to which a civilization could direct its energies toward the eternal.

The same immediacy with history can happen at the Athenian Acropolis, the ruins of Pompeii, a village in Switzerland, an English manor house, a baroque palace in Austria, a castle in Spain. If we walk into and around these environments with receptive imaginations, we come away with an impression of European culture we could never get in the United States or in the artificial atmosphere of a museum. Yet, there is always the danger that summer tour conditions can ruin architecture just as summer museum tours can ruin art. Large crowds, tired bodies, and too much too fast can make even a Gothic cathedral seem burdensome.

There are other lessons of a different and more important kind in European architecture. Walking to and fro in the ruins, the American can glimpse something of the glory that was Greece and Rome, but he will also notice how fragile a thing civilization can be. To paraphrase Shelley, we look upon *what's left* of mighty works . . . and despair. Invasions, religious wars, revolutions —Europe seems more a battleground than the bed of Western culture. The

evidence is everywhere. Almost everyone knows the tragedy of the Parthenon, for example, which would stand now almost as it did in the fifth century B.C. were it not for the invention of gunpowder and the Greco-Turkish war over two thousand years later. Then there are those little plaques we see attached to the walls of so many ancient European structures. The message reads something like: "Built during the reign of . . . in the . . . century, A.D. Destroyed 1944. Reconstructed 1956." And in London a block of crumbling brick buildings, the result of the Nazi blitzkreig, is left as a reminder to those who were born after World War II.

So is Dacchau. They've tried to sterilize the atmosphere of the Nazi compound by calling it a museum, but no one standing inside the barbed wire enclosure comes away unaffected. Until then our perceptions of the Holocaust may have come from written accounts, photographs, and movie dramatizations, but when we actually see the barracks, the ovens, the courtyard where some 35,000 inmates died, we know the reality of place, a powerful message. And to realize that the people capable of doing this to other human beings were not Moorish "barbarians" but recent products of the European cultural heritage! They listened to Bach, read Schiller, and occupied those lovely baroque palaces — a sobering thought for students and teachers of the humanities.

There is a lot more to learn about America from the European landscape. Because being overseas gives us some basis of comparison — the kind of anthropological perspective almost impossible to get if we never leave home —we see our own country's architecture through a telescope, so to speak. Acquiring this perspective may be the single most important justification for a European tour. I remember visiting several small European towns and villages, for example, and thinking how, by contrast, my own home town seemed ugly. Of course I live on the east coast of Florida, which is tacky by any standards, but I have lived in other places as well, as had other members of the tour, and Europe was making us conscious of the pervasive *sprawl* of the United States. Not all of it, naturally, but enough for us to know something was wrong.

What had happened? When I got back from the tour I decided to study the problem more carefully, do some traveling, look with fresh eyes at American architecture. What I saw depressed me. I think I recognized for the first time what Lewis Mumford called the "formless urban exudation" that characterizes our present environment. We have lost our villages and towns and have created "developments" in their stead. Each development spreads further and further outward from an original population center so that what used to be a distinct township has now become a proliferation of shopping malls serving traffic to and from other shopping malls with little open greenbelts between them. The result is that we cannot "see" America the way we can see Europe. Corporate architecture has helped with the disguise. Billboards with the same ads,

Kentucky Frieds, Burger Kings, Holiday Inns, Seven-Elevens, Ford dealers — all that multicolored concrete and neon has made driving into one population area of the country the same as driving into another. An archeologist of the future, digging around the ruins of such architecture, would never guess that twentieth-century Americans were known for their spirit of individuality and freedom of expression. We seem a nation literally in-divisible . . . and invisible.

McDonalds and Kentucky Frieds have also invaded England and the Continent, a fact which to the conservative-minded inhabitant signals the downfall of civilization. But fast-food chains overseas seem limited to the interior of the city and serve pedestrian rather than vehicular traffic. The buildings are for the most part unobtrusive, blending into the general decor of the street (Salzburg, Austria, is the best example). There is little of the garish, circus atmosphere of the American thoroughfare with the rows of yellow arches, stilt signs, plastic flags, and flashing arrow signs pointing to the ever-convenient parking areas.

I know there are historical reasons why the outward, directionless spread of America contrasts so sharply with the contained charm of Europe's towns and villages: after all, we inherited a different attitude about land than Europeans did. But, as far as I'm concerned, what allowed it to happen — no, what *caused* it to happen on the scale that it did — was the automobile. I noticed this the day we got back from Europe. Our bus came down one of those typical commercial avenues which run from shopping mall to shopping mall. Good lord, I thought, we are a nation of drive-ins! We can eat, shop, bank, clean clothes, buy liquor, see movies, worship — even pay last respects at a funeral home — without leaving the front seat! The dominant message of our architecture, I realized, is not love of permanence or beauty or the sovereignty of nature, but convenience of access by automobile. Everything seemed designed to attract the driver and make expedient for auto traffic the consumption of the products and services of our economy. The result is a seedy and wasteful mess.

I realize Europe has its own problems with the automobile — the infamous Roman traffic, for example — which illustrate how often, like Wallace Stevens's jar on a Tennessee hill, the older indigenous surroundings bow to the imposition of the new. But in smaller communities, the Europeans, unlike the Americans, have not let the automobile determine the aesthetics of their architecture and their mode of living. In Europe, private car ownership is at least balanced by reliable, efficient mass transit systems. Europeans seem not to have let the automobile mirror status and personality. Besides, Europeans like to walk more than we do. Convenient access for autos seems less important there than the preservation of pathways and vistas enjoyed by pedestrians.

Two other inventions in addition to the automobile, air conditioning and television, helped in the disappearance of the suburban American neighborhood

and made impossible the sense of village. Before the mid-1950s, houses had front porches for cool shade and large open windows for circulating air; now they tend toward the closed monolith, the small private fortress. Then our living room furniture began facing inward, toward the TV console. Later, the family-owned, neighborhood drug and grocery stores, unable to compete with state and national chains, vanished along with the porches.

A few days in Wengen, Switzerland and on the Greek island of Hydra, where there are no cars, no trucks, and none of the accompanying architectural clutter, reminded me of my own pre-Ford days when there was a center, a gathering place for a kind of extended tribal family where I would be welcome if the literal family became a burden. If Ruskin's idea of architecture as a book of civilization is correct, then our record suggests a fragmented, unstable culture, an architecture without a sense of history or permanence. From the European perspective, I see us as a people too busy moving to and fro, getting and spending, to realize the effect such a life can have on mental health.

Perhaps what I see more clearly since Europe is just an awkward (immature?) stage — the automobile phase — of U.S. civilization. When we pass completely into the computer-communication age, the automobile and its appurtenances will disappear, and then the villages and neighborhoods will be born again. I prefer to have faith in the myth that technology will get us out of the mess it got us into in the first place. At such a time we can set our minds to other things, like art, or a new religion, and to creating an architecture of humanism. In the meantime, back from Europe and ready to drop names with the best of them, I continue to drive my large American car to a college campus where I sit in a windowless classroom and talk with students about the "humanities." But now at least I have a better idea what to say.

You are here, I tell them, because education in a democracy has got to mean more than training for the job market or preparation for some kind of Trivial Pursuit game. You study Capital C Culture because such knowledge will help you recognize the choices you have for your future and the future of your environment. A lot of people in this country evidently are not aware of their own past, much less the course of European or any other civilization. They have not been taught to think critically or to take aesthetic judgments seriously. Many of these same people sit on city councils and zoning boards, hold state and federal offices, and make decisions about the environment we live in. You can see the results. Thus it is important that we at least have a glimpse at what the greatest creative minds of our culture have to show us and, as a result, learn to see ourselves from a new perspective. Architecture is a good place to start. A trip to Europe will help, so I encourage you to take the grand tour some summer. But only if you are prepared to see, not so much the old masters of the museums, but the new masters . . . yourselves.

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